

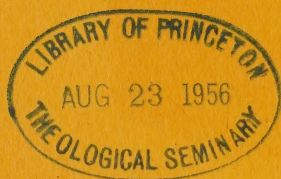


Hand on My Shoulder

GABINO RENDÓN

dedicated to EDITH AGNEW

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Hand on my shoulder

HAND ON MY SHOULDER

Books by Edith Agnew

THE SONGS OF MARCELINO

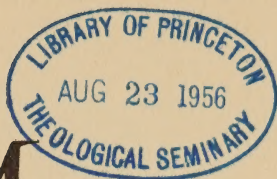
MY ALASKA PICTURE STORY BOOK

SANDY AND MR. JALOPY

THE THREE HENRYS AND MRS. HORNICLE

THE GRAY EYES FAMILY

NEZBAH'S LAMB



Hand on My Shoulder

By GABINO RENDÓN

As told to EDITH AGNEW

BOARD OF NATIONAL MISSIONS
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U.S.A.
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Foreword

SELDOM, if ever, has a book been put together in the fashion of this one. Over a period of twenty years I have been collecting fragments of data concerning Mr. Rendón's early life—in conversations, during meetings when he was speaking, on trips in cars when my scribbles were almost beyond deciphering, through letters, in background reading. Now that the jigsaw puzzle is put together, we are both sure that much has been left out that should be told. This is not the whole story; it is only a slice through the life of a man who represents a disappearing era. The results of that era are here today, however, as the lively Spanish Americans of a new generation are witness.

Mr. Rendón keeps remembering incidents which we wish we might include, now that it is too late. And he regrets deeply the omission of numerous names—names of fellow workers, mission teachers, students, friends who have meant much to him in his ministry. It is not his fault that many have been removed in the editing. There was not space enough to characterize each one, and they interrupted the main flow of the narrative. They all belong in a history which must some day be written, fully and clearly.

On my part, I regret leaving out much historical background. I should like to have sketched in more of the reasons why the Reformation was so imperative in the Southwest—but after all you can find those reasons in history books. I should like to develop some of the dramatic clashes between personalities that evidently occurred, but those are other stories. As it is, I must

ask Mr. Rendón's pardon for putting some of my own words into his mouth and for giving some incidents a slant that was never in his mind. In some cases he still says, "No, you have not got that quite right," and I know it is so. On the whole, however, the story is as true as we can make it, and it bears testimony to a man worth remembering and a cause worth a life.

Personally, this has been a rich and rewarding task. The Christian friendship of Mr. and Mrs. Rendón and their fine family has been an inspiration in itself. Pursuing the story has led into many interesting by-paths and has given me a deeper appreciation of the faith we hold in common.

I am especially grateful to my former colleagues at Holman, New Mexico—Misses Annetta Bell, Lela Weatherby, and Gladys Brown—for their help during the initial stages; to Doctors Paul L. Warnshuis and William H. Orr for their encouragement; to the Rev. Harper C. Donaldson, Mrs. H. George Prescott, Mr. and Mrs. William Shillinglaw, and Mr. James Cox for the loan of or access to helpful source materials; to my friends in the Office of Education and Publicity of the Board of National Missions for getting the story into print, despite many difficulties; and, of course, to my long-suffering family and Rebecca Rendón for their unfailing patience.

Besides various books of history and description, which I shall not attempt to list, the following materials have been especially useful:

Record books of John Annin; Mr. Rendón's diaries; *Our Mexicans*, by Robert M. Craig; *Our Mexican Mission Schools*, by Katharine R. Crowell; an unpublished manuscript by Alice M. Blake; *Minutes of the First Presbyterian Church of Las Vegas*; *Minutes of the Synod of New Mexico of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Fiftieth Annual Meeting, 1938*; files of *La Aurora*; items from the *Las Vegas Optic*; history cards for mission schools in the files of the Board of National Missions; *Historical Sketch of the Presbytery of Pueblo, Colorado*, by M. H. MacLeod; *History of the Jesuit College of New Mexico and Colorado*, by Edward R. Vollmar, S.J. (thesis); *Jesuit*

Beginnings in New Mexico, 1867-1882, by Sister M. Lilliana Owens in collaboration with Rev. Fr. Gregory Goñi, S.J., and Rev. Fr. J. M. Gonzalez, S.J.; and materials produced during the centennial celebration of the City of Las Vegas, 1935.

At the ordination of Tomás González in 1943, Mr. Rendón preached a sermon and sent me a copy. The text was, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Galatians 6:9) That sermon was partly for me, I am sure. So many times I have been forgetful and neglectful of my task, or just plain lazy. Now I should like to complete it with the wish for Mr. Rendón which he has made for many a young minister, "That he may finish his course with joy."

EDITH AGNEW

September, 1953



Las Vegas - circ. 1876

My Mother's World

MY FATHER, José María Rendón, was a buffalo hunter and my mother, Sabina García Rendón, was the daughter of a tavern keeper. The house that I was born in leaned against the tavern, indeed was part of it. Brown adobe brick, like all the hundred-odd houses of the town, it stood right in the very heart of Old Las Vegas, New Mexico, close to the *plaza* (square). The Santa Fé trail went right by the door. The tavern was also a store, with a stock of salt, flour, coffee, candles, dried meat, and bread stuffs made by my mother and grandmother.

Naturally I cannot remember the event of my being born, but I know it happened on the nineteenth of February, 1864. I was named for the saint listed on our saint's calendar for that day, *San Gabino Presbitero*. If there was anything prophetic about that name, nobody guessed it then.

Father Pinard from the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows christened me, and I have no doubt there was great fiesta with much drinking in the tavern and dancing afterwards; and probably shooting of old muskets as was the custom in those days.

Since my father was often away from home, hunting on the staked plains and trading with Indians, my first memories are of my mother and Grandmother García. They two were very busy, cleaning the house with its hard-packed earthen floor, sewing—they made all our clothes by hand, and cooking on the *fogón de campaña* (stove of the country), which took up a large part of the kitchen. It consisted of an iron grate on legs, set up on an adobe platform. The fire was built on the adobe, under

the grate. The whole corner of the room around the stove was set off by board partitions, built from the ceiling halfway to the floor, catching the smoke to send it up through the adobe chimney. Hanging along the boards were the cooking utensils of brass and earthenware. I remember that when, years later, we acquired a stove with a chimney—much against the protests of Luciano García, my grandfather—the kitchen seemed infinitely larger.

In spite of all the work, my mother and grandmother found time to sing to me the little Spanish lullabies I have taught to my own children:

Señora Santa Ana, Señor San Joaquín,
Arrolla este niño que quiere dormir.
(Holy Saint Anna, Holy Saint Joaquín,
Rock this little boy-child who wants to go to sleep.)

Duermete, niño lindo,
Que allí viene el viejo;
Te arranca la vida
Y a mi el pellejo.
(Sleep, pretty baby,
There comes an old man
To snatch you, your life,
And me, my skin.)

Duermese, mi hijito,
Que tengo que hacer—
Lavar la ropita
Y hacer de comer.
(Go to sleep, my baby,
For I have much to do—
I have to wash the little clothes
And cook the dinner, too.)

They taught me, too, traditional finger plays; counting off on my toes, for instance, in the manner of “this little piggy went to market”:

This one found an egg, this one put it to cook, this one salted it, this one stirred it, and this greedy little dog ate it all up!

Or, their pointer finger made circles in the air coming closer and closer to me and finally poking into the middle of my stomach, so that I screamed with mixed terror and delight, while somebody said:

Lanza, lanza, vete a Francia,
Y picale a Gabino la panza!
(Lance, lance, go to France,
And tickle Gabino under the ribs!)
(The translation is polite for belly.)

Sometimes Mother would take my small hand in hers, like a cup inside a cup, and pretend to take something out of it with my other hand, saying,

Pon, pon, pon,
La manita en el bolsón,
Saca medio para jabón
Para lavar tu pantalón.
(Put, put, put the little hand into
the big pocket, take out money for soap
to wash thy pantaloons.)

When I was a little older we had a game called "*puño, puñete*," which was played with our fists in a pile. They flew off one by one to hit us on the forehead, and the fist at the very bottom of the pile had in it, we pretended, a mouse, a bee, or something else that could bite.

As soon as I could talk I learned to recite nursery rhymes. I am afraid I dearly loved the center of the stage, so that I made a great oration from rhymes such as:

Mi nana tiene un becerrito,
Mi tata lo matará;
Del cuero hará un tamborcito,
Lo que fuere sonará.
(My grandma has a little calf,
My daddy, he will kill it.
And from the hide he'll make a drum,
Whatever the sound may be.)

My mother's fingers had a nimble way with a needle, and I

was fascinated by the way she made it fly in and out of a piece of fine embroidery. Most of the time, however, she had to work on plain everyday clothing. I remember she had to reinforce our trousers to make them last. She had a special way of sewing on buttons, which I learned from her as soon as my fingers were big enough to manage a needle and thread, and I still can do it the way she taught me.

I loved to watch Mother and Grandmother make from cornhusks the "papers" for *cigarritos* to be sold in the store. They padded their left knees and laid a single husk there, whisking it briskly with a knife until all the surface fibers were gone and the corn husk was thin and clear like tissue paper. Each one found its place in a pile, and when the pile was deep enough, one of them took a sharp knife and sliced the stack into a rectangle, tying it together with a narrow ribbon of red cornhusks.

While they brushed and cut, cut and brushed, neighbor women would come in to visit. It was from their gossip that I learned of the beginning of life and the end of it; of diseases and wise women's cures; of the evil eye and charms to keep it from doing harm; of the ever-present fears of women whose menfolk were so often gone on dangerous missions.

Sometimes the women looked at me strangely. "He is small for his age," they said, and wagged their heads, and my mother bristling a little, would say, "But his mind is quick. He is going to be different—not like his father—no, nor his grandfathers, either." And this was beyond my understanding, because I knew she loved my father better than life, and my Grandfather García also. I never knew my Grandfather Rendón, for he died long before I was born.

On shelves around the walls of our house stood a number of saints—*santos*, we called them—and the family prayed to each one for a different reason. But the Virgin was above all *santos*. She was painted in oils on a wooden plaque and stood on a shelf by herself. She was very beautiful, I thought, with a dress of soft rose color, a long mantle of sky blue covered with gold stars, and with the curve of a crescent moon at her feet. She was *Nuestra*

Señora de Guadalupe, the *patrona* of the Mexican people, and we all trusted her for protection. As soon as I could understand any story I learned hers. She had appeared to a poor peasant, Juan Diego, in Old Mexico, and in proof of it her image had miraculously appeared on his *tilma*—his apron.

Mother taught me a long *alabado* (hymn of praise) to her, with this chorus:

O Guadalupe dichosa,
Mejico en una floresa,
Se aparecido a Juan Diego
La Virgen, Señora Nuestra!
(O Guadalupe beloved,
Mexico in flower symbol,
Having appeared to Juan Diego
The Virgin, Our Lady!)

“Love her without fear,” she told me, “and pray to her every day. She will take your prayers straight to the Father Omnipotent. For who are we, poor ones, that we should approach the Almighty God?”

And so I did pray to her and expected all sorts of miracles from her. I suppose I was naïve, but the saints were as live to me as any of the neighbors. And *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* I loved with all my heart.

2

My Father's World

MY FATHER as a very young man served with the Union troops in New Mexico during the Civil War. To his great disappointment, he missed all the genuine fighting, however. After the few skirmishes ended with the defeat of the Confederates in Apache Cañon near Glorieta Pass (1862), the war was over so far as New Mexico was concerned. José María Rendón returned home to Las Vegas, married, and tried to settle down. Yet being tied to one spot was not his idea of living and he preferred the adventure of Indian trading and buffalo hunting to the quieter life of tilling fields.

I must have been four or five years old before I was much aware of my father's world. One of my first distinct memories of it is full of Comanche Indians. They were standing around the sides of our living room-bedroom, or rather leaning against the sheepskin-and-blanket beds rolled up along the walls. They had long stringy hair, high noses, and cheeks smeared with vermilion or yellow ocher. They smelled of horses even more strongly than my father did and when they spoke they made queer guttural sounds.

My great surprise came when my father began to answer them in this same guttural language. They were bargaining about something, but I had no idea what their words meant.

After the strangers had drifted away, a few at a time, I held tight to my mother for a long time, torn between half-fear of the Comanches and full admiration for my father.

My small head was full of stories of Indian massacres. Las

Vegas was the great meeting place for several tribes that gathered there for trade. In my grandfather's time, the Utes had been at war with the Comanches, and my Mexican forebears had joined with the Comanches to drive them out. Real battles were fought around Mora, about forty miles to the north of us, and I suspect that it was in one of these battles that my grandfather, Miguel Rendón, was killed. At least, he was shot by an Indian arrow in some cause which was never too clear to me.

In my father's day the Indians were usually friendly but now and then they assumed a threatening attitude, and my father had to *pregonar* (make a speech) to them to make peace. He usually succeeded.

He did not always wait for the Indians to come to him for trade but carried his bargaining to them. He was always on the move—not like my Uncle Felipe, who preferred to plant wheat and corn on our family land grant along the Gallinas River.

Before father went off on a trading expedition, our house was in a turmoil. We had to make hundreds of the hard rolls we called Comanche biscuit which I learned to make myself. The recipe called for no more than "seconds" (the poorer quality of wheat flour), salt, water, and a little leavening.

We baked the rolls in the outdoor oven, made from adobe mud in a bee-hive shape, like many found to this day in parts of New Mexico. We built a fire inside, and when it was well burned out, raked away the coals and set a layer of loaves on the hot floor, stopping up the door with a stone until the baking was done. Then we pulled the rolls out, heated up the oven again, and re-baked them. They were hard as bullets, and would last for a long time without spoiling.

It was great fun for a small boy, when the baking was done, to toss the rolls onto a white cloth spread over a blanket in the corner of the kitchen and later to help stuff them into long leather saddlebags.

Into the saddlebags also went round mirrors, bolts of blue denim, beads, red face paint, and other things for trading. My

mother made fine beadwork, and sometimes an Indian would trade a whole horse for a piece of it. I remember my father's once teasing my mother a long time because he had been offered an Indian squaw for a couple of mirrors.

It was the Comanches who taught my father how to keep his beard from growing by pulling out the hairs with pincers. Better than that, they taught him how to ride. He was one of the best riders I ever knew.

One time he chased an antelope on a borrowed apricot-colored pony, outran a half dozen cowboys, and (so they told me) actually overtook the animal! I remember best a tough little dappled gray he had, the one he rode to hunt buffaloes. Although he was a short man, only five feet four, he could jump on the pony's back without touching a stirrup. If somebody threw a quarter on the ground he could lean from the saddle and pick it up while the horse was still running. He was one of the best at the game of "*gallos*," in which a chicken is buried with all but its head in the sand, and the horseman pulls it out by the neck as he gallops by. I never liked this game very well, for it was hard to watch the poor cock tossed back and forth between one rider and another until the pitiful thing was all in shreds.

I wasn't more than five years old when I began begging my father to let me ride. For some reason he put me off, time after time. I couldn't understand it at all until I heard him tell my mother, when he thought I was out of hearing, "But it is the horses that make men wild. With a horse under me, I myself am no better than a Comanche. Gabino must not get the taste for them."

I did learn to ride, of course, but later, and I was never such a horseman as my father.

There was always excitement when father came home from a buffalo hunt. He brought long strips of dried meat to sell in the store, hides, and bunches of tongues strung together like fish. I used to peddle the tongues, when I was old enough, for fifteen

cents apiece at the Exchange Hotel, which was owned by Charley Kitchen and often called Kitchen's Hotel.

As soon as one hunting expedition was over, my father would begin to prepare for the next. Rectangular strips of fine leather, Indian-tanned deer hide or buffalo hide, he sewed into saddlebags by folding both ends toward the center, which he left open for the mouth of the sack. Rawhide he shaped into bottles for his supplies of tobacco. Smooth horns he polished, after a good steaming in hot water, and fitted them at the pointed end with a stopper secured by a leather thong. He filled them with powder and covered the wide mouths with stretched leather or pieces of wood. He could make rope from horsehair. Some of the strands would be of different colors.

His hunting spear, which he carefully tested and polished, filled me with awe. It was a long wooden pole, eight feet in length, at the end of which he had firmly attached a metal spear. Those were the days before the *Americanos* had slaughtered the great herds with guns, and when the shaggy animals had a sporting chance. I knew how the killing was done, for my father practiced at home to entertain me.

"Here I go, Gabino," I can hear him say, "spurring my pony right along beside the cow." (The bulls were too tough for meat, and seldom were hunted.) "I keep the spear pointed straight for her heart, and when I am close enough—*así*—in it goes behind the front leg, between the ribs—and down she falls!"

My father never stopped to finish the kill and skin the animal, leaving that for the man behind him. His job was only to do the stabbing, which took the most nimble riders.

I often amused myself at playing buffalo hunt, charging into great imaginary herds with a sharpened stick for a spear. And I was always teasing my father to take me with him on a real hunt. When the time came, however, we were both disappointed.

A band of hunters was on the way home bringing wagons loaded with buffalo meat, and my father came ahead as a *correo* (advance rider) to announce their approach. In Las Vegas a party got ready to meet the hunters at Romeroville, five miles

to the south, and help them with the cargo. I begged my father to take me with him, and he consented.

It was bitterly cold the day we started. I was carefully wrapped in several blankets but still I shivered and my teeth knocked against each other. Try as hard as I could to keep my whimpering from being heard, at last it escaped from the blanket folds. My father, looking down at me, saw that I was quietly sobbing.

"What's the matter?" he asked me.

"The cold, Father. My feet are frozen, and my two hands."

He uncovered my hands and looked at them. They were like blue ice. He stopped the horses and built a fire beside the road, and I kept my hands and feet to it until I was thawed out. But by that time we had lost the company of the other wagons. There was great silence between us as we drove on back to Las Vegas.

My mother would not let me stay ashamed. "It is all right, *mi'jito*—my little one" she told me. "The days of buffalo hunts are passing. We have spoken of it, your father and I. You are going to be something different. What that will be, God knows—but it won't be the life of a hunter. You are going to be civilized."

Well, I had no idea what it meant to be civilized, but the word had a pleasant sound as my mother used it.

3

The World Outside

I WAS no more than five years old when I got acquainted with death. My Grandmother García died, and my baby brother, Luciano. However, I was not deeply disturbed by death. I was too much interested in the life opening up all around me.

My first adventures out of the house took me, with a brigade of small boys, to carry water from the *acequia madre* (the mother ditch) about a quarter of a mile away. The first buckets I carried were small and modest, but I soon grew to the point where I could manage large wooden ones. We found it easier to carry the water if we slipped barrel hoops over our heads and walked in the middle of them, balancing two buckets by bracing the handles, one in each hand, against the outer rim of the hoops. There was no end to the tricks we could perform with those hoops before and after our treks for water.

The ditch led out from the Gallinas River, east of us. That river, now only a thin trickle in a sand bed, spread out over far more territory than it covers today. (It was named for the wild turkeys which abounded on its banks. The people called them *gallinas de la tierra*—hens of the land.) Beyond the river, where East Las Vegas stands today, was nothing much but grama grass—good pasture for our horses—small fields of grain, and the *camposanto* (cemetery). All along the banks were clumps of willows and cottonwoods. Fishing was good and there were clear quiet pools ideal for swimming. Beavers had built a dam somewhat below the place where the present bridge stands, and

swallows went skimming back and forth over the smooth running water.

It was not so quiet when caravans came splashing through at the ford—bands of buffalo hunters from the plains to the east, early in the spring; traders' caravans all the way from Missouri and Kansas as soon as the roads were open across the Ratón Pass; the stage coach, changing horses over on the east side of the river; and in the fall wagon after wagon full of wheat, wool, and hides from the Mora Valley.

We had other sorts of excitement, too. One morning there was at our house a flurry of preparation to go somewhere very suddenly. Everybody made a rush for tools and pans.

"What has happened?" someone asked.

"We are going to dig for gold at the cemetery on the other bank, there on the hill."

My father and others of the household went, including me. I took something to dig with and a small tin pan to wash gold. When we reached the *camposanto*, the hill was covered with gold diggers, like ants on an ant hill.

I remember particularly seeing the old blind beggar, Tío Senci3n, digging with a pick, the sweat all over his face. How he expected to wash gold, I don't know. Perhaps he would rely on the boy who attended him, a youngster named Venturo. I couldn't wait to see, for I was too busy myself, digging earnestly in the earth and carrying pans of it to the ditch to wash it. When I found a bit of copper in the bottom of my pan I was delighted beyond words.

A few did find "*color*," some very small particles of gold, but most of us found none. Before the day was over, we strolled away, much disheartened.

It was all a hoax. A hardware firm in town had on hand a lot of used tools left over from digging a ditch. In order to get rid of them, they hired a goldsmith, Don Teodocio Lucero, to scatter gold filings over the cemetery and start the rumor going. Many of the tools were sold, but the people who bought them were also "sold"!

As for the blind beggar, Tío Senci3n, I must tell you that he was one of the old-fashioned beggars, not one who would say, "*Pan de s3bado por amor de Dios*" (Sabbath bread for the love of God). No, he would stand at a distance from the doors of houses and sing a long *alabado* in a loud voice. I used to like to hear him.

The first fire I remember happened in a row of houses belonging to Don Romualdo Baca, whose family was prominent in New Mexican history. After the fire he built on the same property the largest house of its kind ever to stand in Las Vegas. It was a never-ending wonder to us small boys, who, while we were waiting for the last bell to ring for mass, used to "inspect it" from basement to cupola.

The basement and the first floor were built of blue limestone, the second and third of adobe brick, and the fourth—for there were four stories!—of lumber. It was so huge it was never all occupied. On the first floor were stores, butcher shops, and other shops. The halls above could be used for meetings of various sorts.

Some pale-skinned *Americanos*—Anglos—had started business houses on the *plaza*. When my father was at home, he would take me sometimes to a trading post—Judge Hubbell's, the Romero's, Major Morrison's, the Rosenwald Brothers', the Ilfelds', or Chapman's. A man named Jos3 Ynez Perea had a store, too, and when he came in from taking care of his large flocks and herds, he could sometimes be seen checking up accounts behind the counter. This man brought something entirely new to our countryside, and I must tell you more about him.

Don Ynez, as we called him, was the son of a prominent Spaniard in Bernalillo and had traveled around the world. For that reason, people looked up to him. But he was a *protestante* (Protestant) and I got the impression that he probably had horns and a tail. However, when I had a good look at him, I found him much as other men. He was even rather handsome,

I thought, with trim black chin whiskers, and warm, friendly eyes.

He was the forerunner of the Reformation, coming three hundred years late to New Mexico—but how was I to know that? How was I to know that he had been converted by reading a forbidden Bible in a school in the East and had been disowned by his parents? That was why he traveled from port to port, and that was why, even now, he spent so little time in his palatial home in Bernalillo, although his father—if not his mother—had forgiven him.

From sheep camp to sheep camp, Don Ynez had spread tracts and portions of Scripture. Day after day he had prayed for the coming of a missionary, one who could preach to his people and perhaps start a school. So many of the people could not even read the tracts!

In the fall of 1869, when I was nearly six, a new sort of *Americano* arrived in Las Vegas. He was the answer to the prayer of Don Ynez, sent by the Board of Domestic Missions of the Presbyterian Church to begin a church and a school.

Two Schools—A Church

AS I SUPPOSE, it had been announced that a school was going to be opened—the first public school that I knew of—and parents were supposed to take their children there. One of the teachers was to be Don Valentín Vásquez, “the great orator.” No doubt he had a good Spanish education, for people looked upon him as a great man, and he could get up and make an eloquent speech. He was a lawyer and in justice of the peace courts he was feared by lawyers on the opposing side. It was not easy to contend against Don Valentín. But Don Valentín drank something stronger than coffee and water.

Whether I was of school age or not, I don’t know, but my father took me and put me in charge of Don Valentín. Together with other beginners I went over the Spanish alphabet in a loud voice.

At home I would lie down on a folded *serape* (blanket) with my feet up against the wall and with a loud voice even louder than in school, would shout the letters until someone would call, “Not so loud, Gabino!” Yes, I knew my letters.

One day Don Valentín drank more than usual, sat down, and went to sleep. When he woke up he went over to my desk with a *palmeta* in his hand. The *palmeta* was a stick of wood about eighteen inches long, wider at one end than at the other, the narrower end made to fit the hand of the holder.

Don Valentín shouted at me, “Spell ‘del’ or I’ll hit you a *palmetazo!*”

Although I could hardly speak, I managed to whisper, "I am not able." And in truth I was not, for he had never taught me to spell that word nor any other.

"Hold out your hands," he said, and I obeyed. In all my years I had never felt such a pain as tore through my small fingers and ripped at my wrists. My head went down on the desk and sobs shook me from head to foot.

I can't remember what I told my mother, but it sufficed. I did not have to return to the school of Don Valentín Vásquez.

Although I cannot recall exactly what brought it about, by April of the next year (1871) I found myself enrolled in Mr. John Annin's school. My name appears in the old record book:

April 3 — Gavino Rendon

I am not surprised at the "v" in my name. The "b" sounded so when I pronounced it. Indeed, the sounds of "b" and "v" were so close together that we often had to ask, "Do you mean a *b-be de burro* or a *v-ve de vaca* (cow)?"

The school had begun, without my being aware of it, the year before. The old record book reads thus, in purple ink that hasn't faded much in over eighty years:

San Miguel County
Educational and Literary
Institute
The First term of this
Institution opened
on Tuesday, March 1st, 1870
as a *Free School*
in the residence of
Rev. J. A. Annin
the Principal
in Las Vegas, New Mexico
with Four scholars viz
Jesse S. Taylor Son of Jno. L. Taylor
Alfred Green } Children Alfred Green
Sephenia Green } of
Willy A. Annin

The book says that Mr. Annin furnished some of the pupils with pens, paper, and so on, as well as books. Seventeen were enrolled the first term, seven of whom could not understand English. During the second year—my first—thirty-seven were enrolled, but some of us did not enter until late in the year, and attendance was very irregular.

It would be pleasant to state that I was much influenced by John Annin's mission school, but that would be stretching the truth. I learned to read as far as the second reader. I must have learned some Spanish hymns and listened to the Scripture Mr. Annin so earnestly read to us; yet I cannot say that any of these made any great impression on me. Attempts to teach me English were wasted after I reached the second reader.

Mr. Annin's two daughters, Laura and Rebecca, helped him in the school. Miss Laura in particular was good to look at. She remembered our names and was able to connect them with our faces, and even knew us when she met us on the street. Perhaps her popularity accounted for the fact that Mr. Annin wrote in his record book during the year I entered: "My school has been full much the greater part of the winter & many times so full as to result in great crowding & great inconvenience in the school room."

From the school itself only flashes of incidents stick in my mind, some of them as small as a marble game in which I cheated.

One morning my shoes were pronounced past wearing. My mother couldn't conjure shoes out of an old shirt with a skillful needle. Shoes cost hard cash—and cash is what we didn't have. She persuaded me—against my better judgment—to go to school in a pair of my father's boots. The boots spread wide apart at the tops, giving me the effect of a bow-legged cowboy. I fear I swaggered, acting proud because I was embarrassed.

At intermission I was out on the hard hillside with some other small boys, playing at *picadita*, our favorite marble game. One of the players would shoot all his marbles, one at a time, over the edge of a slanting rock until they were scattered helter-

skelter over the ground. The second player shot from behind the same rock and if he managed to hit one of his opponent's marbles, he could keep all those on the field.

"Do you wish to play, Gabino?" a boy asked me.

"No, *gracias*, I do not wish," answered I. It seemed better not to explain that I couldn't play because I had no marbles to shoot. I squatted on my heels, watching the other boys shoot *bolitas* from their grimy fists.

Suddenly the miracle happened. A marble rolled into the top of one boot that was spread so wide to receive it. I tried to look innocent and curled my toes around it, waiting. Evidently nobody had noticed. After a decent length of time I leaned over and quietly slipped my hand into the boot. And the marble came out, a nice firm one. I put on an air of great unconcern and said, "I find I have one marble left. I will play now. I will play with Rafael."

Rafael shot a dozen marbles over the rock. I aimed my one with greatest care and had success. I won the whole dozen! Now I had no more shame for the wide boots of my father, since they had brought so much good fortune, but I was somehow glad that Miss Laura did not know about that particular game.

I remember once when I came to school early on a cold morning and was invited into the Annin living room to warm my hands at the stove. Family prayers were going on. They were so different from the prayers at our house, said with rosaries to Our Lady or to some saint, that I did not easily forget them.

Mr. Annin read from a large Bible—in English so that I understood nothing of the reading. Then he prayed a long, long prayer, with the family all on their knees. Perhaps for my sake, they sang a Spanish hymn afterward with Miss Laura at the organ, while Mrs. Annin kept a hand on the wigglesome Willie. I carried away a vague impression of a room that seemed too full of foreign-looking furniture—a carpet, old china, books, stuffed chairs with tidies on the arms. Most of all I carried away the picture of the lovely Miss Laura on her knees.

During this period Mr. Annin had on his mind many larger

matters than what went on in the schoolroom. He and Mr. Perea were building a church and a schoolhouse connected with it. Mr. Perea managed to spend much time in Las Vegas in those days, for he was financial manager of the building. Men in town were glad to work for Don Ynez. It was certain that no man in the territory was more fair in business dealings than he, in spite of his strange ideas about religion.

My father hauled several thousand *adobes* (bricks) for the walls. I am glad to see from the old account books, which were eventually placed in my possession, that, whereas most of the workers signed receipts for their pay with marks, my father clearly wrote his name. He had taught himself to read and write by studying labels and catalogs. Other entries bring back to me that other time so long ago:

Jesús Martin engages to make fifteen thousand adobes of the size 14 inches in length by 8 inches wide, and deliver them in good order piled up on the ground where they are made . . .

Julian Chávez agrees and binds himself to lay adobes in a good and workmanlike manner (so that José Ynez Perea & John A. Annin shall be entirely satisfied with the work) for the building designated for church and school . . . and to work at the same every day (Except Sunday) when not prevented by bad weather.

The whole building is to be roofed and shingled in a good and substantial manner . . . Windows are to be constructed with a box at the sides that they may slide on pulleys with weights.

This agreement . . . engages and binds Refugio Aguirre to haul adobes with one yoke of oxen and one wagon and one man besides himself for three dollars a day . . .

The church did not concern us at all in those days. One of my schoolmates, Rafael Gallegos, joined it. He was a young man of about twenty and had lived for some time in the Annin house. Most of the people in Las Vegas thought it was a disgrace for him to become a Protestant. He soon left town, to do evangelistic work at a village north of us, a place called Buena Vista.

I have a feeling, as I look at the old church records, that Mr.

Annin and Don Ynez did not see eye to eye on the matter of examining and "cutting off" so many members from the rolls. I think Don Ynez was more inclined to forgive them, understanding better the "temptations" of the wild country in which they lived. But Mr. Annin was a strong believer in discipline. I think I see them, gazing at each other over a table where the building accounts were being added and subtracted, each wondering how he came to be "yoked" with the other. Not long after the time of which I am writing, Don Ynez decided to become a minister himself. Perhaps he had come to understand that only one of his own people could really minister to them. But this is only guessing.

In later years, of course, I realized the importance of that little church. It marked the opening of the Bible to the common people and the beginning of religious liberty in our part of the world.

5

Boy about Town

MR. ANNIN appeared often in public places, making his presence felt. At the hanging of the Negro, for instance, he was one of the chief actors. That was an event to stand out in a small boy's memory.

I followed the crowd, hanging hard to the skirts of my cousin María. The mob had gone to the jail to watch the sheriff and under-sheriff lead the condemned man out of prison. By the time we got into the crowd, it was a milling mass of wild, yelling, sweating people.

"What did he *do*?" I stammered to María. But she only said. "*Quién sabe?*" Who knew, indeed. There were things too awful for the men to tell us. Besides, no one seemed to care now, so long as he was hanged.

The gallows was a crude home-made affair rigged up on our street—in fact, rather near our house. On a pole was hinged a cross-bar, longer at one end than the other. At the end of the longer section hung a rope with a noose in the end of it. At the end of the shorter section hung two gunny sacks full of stones. To keep the long bar from flying upward before the proper time, it was held down by a rope attached to a stake driven into the ground.

The sheriffs managed to clear a space around the platform so that even I, small as I was and squeezed in by all the others, could see what was going on. Here came the sheriffs, pushing the black man toward the noose. Here came Frank Roto, a

character familiar about gambling halls and saloons, with a sharp hatchet in his hand.

We got quiet for a moment while Mr. Annin said some words which I couldn't catch very well, although he spoke in Spanish. Something about a man on a cross and the mercy of Christ. They were strange words to say, I thought, for after all Mr. Annin was not a priest. He could not forgive sins.

A black cap slipped over the man's eyes. The noose dropped over his head onto his shoulders. Frank Roto held his hatchet ready at the taut rope.

"The Lord have mercy on your soul," said John Annin, The hatchet cut through the rope and the end of the bar flew upward, the noose tightening around the man's neck. I can feel again the stopping of my breath and the horror that went through me.

When I was able to see anything again, the great body was swinging limply and the crowd was beginning to dissolve. I clung to María as if I would never let go. At the same time I was aware that John Annin was still standing beside the gallows, his head bowed as if he might be praying, his long beard pouring down over the front of his coat.

But there were places small boys went where John Annin did not come. He did not follow us to the south of town, for instance, where José Durán kept his bulls between Sunday bull-fights. We used to love tagging along behind the cowboys who drove the bulls up to the pen on Chávez Street where the fights were held.

There were no killers in this bull ring, and I don't remember that anybody was seriously hurt for the tips of the bulls' horns had been sawed off. The fun lay in watching the animals being teased and decorated.

Don Jesús Alvarez, the acrobat, would lie on his back in front of the door where the bull would come out. Between his feet, which he held up in the air, was a *banderilla de rosa*, a tissue paper contrivance very much the shape and size of a giant

sunflower. In the center was a metal point to make it stick in the hide of the animal.

Now when the bull came out of the enclosure, Don Jesús flicked his feet and rolled over—and the flower flew out to hit the bull right on the forehead. On went the bull, well adorned, to meet other *toreros* and get more decorations.

And we who sat in the galleries threw down cardboard cornucopias with pins sticking out of the small end—the pins held in place with melted wax or soap. We blew these toward the animals through cardboard tubes.

In later years I used to entertain my children by imitating the stunt of Don Jesús—without benefit of bulls, you may be sure.

Don Jesús was a good performer also on trapezes and horizontal bars. We small boys used to watch him practice and then imitate all the stunts we could.

At my home some changes were taking place. My two sisters were born, Petra and Andrea, Petra in 1872 when I was eight, and Andrea two years later. Probably I stayed out of school while they were being baptized, for a priest would hardly baptize a child who had a brother in a Protestant school. Father Coudert, who baptized them, was a Frenchman who spoke with a strong foreign accent.

Petra made us happy from the first, for she was lively and full of high spirit, not at all like the weak and delicate Luciano who so soon had died. Andrea, too, was strong enough, but I am sorry to say that after she was born my mother was never completely well.

When I was ten I left Mr. Annin's school, for reasons that will be made clear in another chapter, and for the next three years my education was decidedly sketchy. I was in a public school for a few weeks, but was put back into the primer class because of my small size. I was too shy to show the teacher how well I could read and when he failed to discover it I grew discouraged and soon dropped out.

There was plenty for me to do without going to school. I went

often with my mother to the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows to "make the stations of the cross" and I saw the beggars gathered beside the doors. I watched new buildings going up, and marveled at traveling acrobats who brought Mexican shows to town. I ran about the streets with a gang of small boys and gambled for buttons until my father persuaded me to stop. And I was not entirely useless to my family for I could be of some help in the tavern-store of Grandfather García and in the fields of my Uncle Felipe.

Now and then in those days I met one of the Annins, with an uncomfortable feeling of shame that I was not in school. I remember one encounter in particular.

It must have been the fall of 1875 when we had the "black harvest," and the wheat heads were heavy with thick smut. I was helping my uncle with the threshing in his fields down by the river, and I remember how black I was. We were pitching the sliploads of grain onto a strip of stony ground where the horses beat it out with their hooves, and every time I stuck my pitchfork into a sheaf of grain a cloud of black dust settled over me.

Whether a pitchfork broke, or a piece of harness, I don't remember; but some need arose and I was dispatched on an errand to the *plaza*. (I suppose my uncle sent me because I was light on my feet and could make good time, and also because I would not be missed so much as one of the men. At any rate, I was the delegate.)

There was no time for washing, with all the men shouting, "*Apurate! Hurry!*" I wiped my face on my sleeve, smudging the black in streaks and splotches over my cheeks and forehead and dodged into town through well-known short-cuts. The return trip took me along the street below the Annin mission, and I hurried along, hoping fervently I would not meet anyone I knew.

Yet here she came! Even before I lifted my eyes, I knew who she was—Miss Laura Annin—cool and dainty—and so clean! I prayed to all the saints for the earth to open and swallow me, but

no such miracle happened. I could not escape, for she had already recognized me. She was moving toward me, swiftly, with a gracious hand outstretched.

"Why, Gabino! Good morning!"

I put my right hand behind me and my eyes went down.

"I—I—I'm too black to shake hands, Miss Laura."

Her laugh rang out, the friendly, merry laugh that I had been lonely to hear. "Nonsense, Gabino! What's a little black—between friends?"

I brought my hand out then, and her white one closed over it, while the shamed perspiration went trailing down in front of my ears. At the same time a lump of pride rose in my throat. She was not ashamed to touch me, black and all!

She must have wondered why I was not in school that year. Yet she remembered me! She *liked* me!

I moved away as if in a trance. Back in the harvest field I kept glancing at my right hand. It seemed to have a tingling sensation that occasionally went to my head.

The next summer I was one of a quartet of boys who began to put on acrobatic shows of our own—for money. We had admired for years the stunts of performers in Mexican traveling shows, and now we were old enough to copy them. Of course there were some tricks we could not imitate. We could not hold a great stone on our stomachs while somebody broke it with a sledge hammer; nor could we lift with our teeth a table with four men standing on it. But we could mimic the acrobats' language and turn ourselves about on bars and trapezes.

We practiced long and hard, setting up poles with horizontal bars and stringing up trapezes with ropes which we stole from our fathers' barns. Added to the pure acrobatics were a number of stunts that grew in magnitude as we proceeded: "The Leap of the Lion," "The Fall of Niagara," "The Dance of the Phenomenal Three-legged Man," and the "Barbaric Indian of the North." I was the clown, and my favorite pose was standing on my head. I also danced a few awkward steps that made

people laugh. I was the announcer, too, for I was beginning to have a certain knack for putting words together.

Certain men in the town took an interest in our company and gave us some help. Mr. Lucero of the hardware store gave us some stout new ropes; another merchant furnished us a flag, rather faded, to be sure, but still a flag; and the town poet, José Pereida, began to compose verses for me to recite.

We were soon able to pay a fiddler and even when we subtracted what we owed him we were able to clear as much as fifty cents apiece every Sunday afternoon. Our shows were such a success that we repeated them the next summer, 1877, until an epidemic of small-pox put an end to them.

The Jesuits—Their School

IN THE YEAR when Petra was born, some Italian priests—Jesuit missionaries—had come into Las Vegas on a preaching mission. Some of them had been in Spain and they spoke Spanish fluently. I still remember Father Donato Gasparri, for he was the most eloquent speaker I had ever heard. Even my father had never heard such preaching.

Two years later some of these priests returned to establish a permanent mission, promising to open a school—"college" they called it—in which there would be a chance for good scholarship and where at the same time they would be able to counteract the "heretical influence" of John Annin. My father welcomed them, feeling that their school would solve the problem of my education without causing my mother to worry about my religion. He took me out of Mr. Annin's school and, in return for the promise of tuition for me, gave the priests a plot of land from our family land grant to become part of the "college" grounds.

The building took a long time—all those months while I was getting an education without books on the streets and in the fields. Meanwhile the priests lived at the house of one Don Francisco López on what is now South Pacific Street, at the foot of the hill where the Protestant mission stood.

While they called on the inhabitants of Las Vegas and made preparations for the school, the Jesuits edited and printed a paper called *La Revista Catolica*, a paper which is still pub-

lished today. (For a few years Mr. Annin edited one in competition with it called *La Revista Evangelica*.)

The Jesuit school was opened at last, November 5, 1877, so the records say, though it seems to me to have been more like October. We had classes in the López house, for the new building was still unfinished. I was glad to be one of the charter pupils.

I remember well the great impatience of my teacher, Father Lorenzo Fede, when the bell would ring at the Protestant mission. He would put his hands over his ears and stop our recitation. "Wait till little Don Juan Annin finishes ringing the bell!" he would exclaim.

Father Fede was a wonderfully well educated man; I am not surprised that he was impatient with us at times, for he was better prepared to teach theology than the A B C's. Only three of us appeared to please him—Serafín Otero, Patricio Sena, and I. I was fortunate to be among these three, for he spared no pains with us. On our part, we were strongly attracted to him.

Father Alphonse Rossi tried to teach us English, which seemed to us our most difficult and useless subject. We memorized a few rhymes, our hands over our ears while other pupils recited. I still remember two of them:

THE FARMER BOY

I am a merry farmer boy,
A farmer I will be,
In fields and crops there is my joy,
Fine crops I like to see.
I like to see the yard alive
With poultry, cats, and dogs,
And to the stable I will drive
The horses, cattle, and hogs.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

Dear angel, ever at my side,
How loving thou must be
To leave thy home in heaven above
To guard a child like me.

Years afterwards I heard a Protestant version which went like this:

Dear Jesus, ever at my side,
How loving thou must be
To leave they home in heaven above
To save a child like me.

An English-speaking priest who came somewhat later has written of his difficulties in teaching English. These are some of the phrases he quoted from his pupils:

"Hipolito, he said me bad words." "He said me 'dog.'" "I may can, he did bought, I gaved him." He added that his pupils were, however, "respectful and easy to manage." "You see burros with high loads," he wrote, "men on horseback with women trudging behind, youngsters with almost no clothing . . ." "They live on coffee, chili, buffalo meat, and *frijoles*. They *smell* of buffalo meat." I presume that his description fitted us.

We studied Ripalda's catechism, the Spanish reader, spelling, and geography. Some of our texts were printed on the press used for *La Revista Catolica*.

The priests' house was built around a patio entered through a large wooden gate. Sometimes I helped weed the patio garden, and sometimes the priests rewarded me with the taste of new foods. Father Fede gave me my first dish of peaches and cream.

Since my tuition was paid by the land we had given, I had to help my family get its money's worth by studying as much as I could. Therefore I was not required to stay out to work. It was wonderful to feel myself actually making progress in my studies again and being a real credit to my teachers and my family.

Our first commencement was to be held in August, 1878, in the huge Baca house. Awards would be presented for scholarship, and I was slated for one of those awards. I looked forward to the day with mixed feelings. For one thing I was worried about clothes.

Ever since I could remember, Mother had made my clothes and they had been entirely satisfactory. But now when I was fourteen years old—nearly grown up—my companions were beginning to wear store clothes imported from Kansas City or St. Louis, and I yearned to possess, for just one day, a store suit. However, I hated to hurt my mother's feelings by suggesting that the clothes I had were not quite suitable.

Finally I asked my grandfather about the matter and he was immediately helpful. He knew a man who had a soldier coat—and happened to be in need of groceries. And so a trade was made. Then Grandfather hired a tailor to remodel the coat to fit my shoulders.

Father Fede quietly asked me about commencement clothes and I was glad to be able to tell him I had a good coat. He borrowed some trousers for me from a boy named Samuel García. (He afterwards became a priest, but that has nothing to do with the trousers.)

Mother could not be satisfied, however, without adding something that she had made and so she manufactured a white collar to go with the coat, every stitch hand sewn. She was ill at the time and made it while she was in bed.

I studied the whole in the long mirror Father had brought home in a trade and I found the effect good. I was presentable. I was even good-looking, I acknowledged to myself! And I imagined how I would look, standing in front of all the people while a visiting dignitary adorned me with a medal on which was to be inscribed "Reward of Merit"!

The day itself was most successful for me. If only my mother could have seen the exercises, it would have been complete. (I am afraid she cried while they were going on.)

Part of our program was a public examination, during which any pupil might ask a question of any other. I questioned the oldest pupil in the school—a man grown—and when he could not answer he burst into tears. My sympathy is with the man today, but when I was fourteen I felt only my own triumph.

Father Fede looked at me now and then, and I smiled back

at him. Archbishop Lamy, the great church dignitary from Santa Fé, was present with his vicario, whose name I have forgotten. It was the vicario who pinned the medal on my soldier coat, in the midst of great applause. I felt a glow more satisfying than any I had ever felt, even at an acrobatic show.

After the ceremonies Father Fede sought me out and shook my hand.

"You'll be with us next term, I hope," he said.

"Oh, yes," I answered, still prancing on my cloud. "I hope never to miss a day."

"Good. I believe you will go far if you persevere. This is only a beginning, you know."

"Yes, Father. It is only a beginning."

Neither of us could see that it was much more of an end.

Death Comes for My Mother

AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE, my mother had not been well since my younger sister Andrea was born. If she had lived in these days, a small operation would have cured her, but at that time we had no modern medicine and no competent doctors. We received plenty of advice, though, from all the neighbors, and Mother tried every remedy they recommended—charms, herbs, plasters, and prayers. None of them seemed to do any good.

We said hundreds of prayers to Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady of Carmen. We read the *novenas* nine days in a row. I could read them well—even beautifully, she said—so that there was no need to hire a reader. Still she was no better. As a last resort we tried a doctor, but my father dismissed him in a passion of anger when he appeared at our house roaring drunk.

Even after all these years it is hard for me to think of my mother's last weeks. She was only thirty-two, but she began to look old. She who had been so gay, so charming, she whom my father had called *luz de mi vida* (light of my life) was like a candle burning out. And there was no way to stop the wasting away. Her hair refused to curl at the temples as it used to do, and her eyes, once so clear and lively, were clouded with discomfort. When she would catch a glimpse of herself in our long mirror, once an object of great pride, she would say, "I wish your father had never brought it home."

She was in bed most of the time that last summer, on a pile of sheepskins on the floor. The first day she went to bed, Andrea,

who was only four, ran to her and asked, "*Mama, y si se muere?*" (Mother, and if you die?) But the rest of us shut our minds to such a thought. At least we tried to.

My father spent much time in the house during those weeks. I cannot remember that he planted any crops. He just took what short, odd jobs he could find. I remember my mother cut out garments for my sisters and he sewed them on the sewing machine. A Navaho Indian woman who had been a slave to one of my uncles came now and then to help with the housework.

It was pitiful that Mother had to miss my commencement honors at the closing program of the school, which I have already described. Of course she saw the medal and was proud of it.

As the weeks of early fall dragged on she grew weaker and weaker. By late fall she was only a wraith, and our hearts were heavy with foreboding of the end. Then one day in November (1878) she died.

I cannot tell you, and unless you have had the same experience, you cannot know the despair and grief that settled over our house. All around was wailing and confusion. The long mirror was turned face to the wall. My grandfather gathered up the images to which we had prayed and, crying aloud for his only daughter, he threw the saints out of the window.

"Estos santos de Nuevo Mejico no sirven para nada!" he shouted. (These saints of New Mexico are good for nothing!)

The house filled quickly with neighbor women who washed and dressed the body, and neighbor men who came to hammer together a coffin in the yard. When it was finished, the women lined it with thin new white cloth and covered the outside with black velvet.

I tried in a poor way to care for Petra and Andrea, who whimpered and clung to me, and I hunted for words to comfort them. There were no words, but the needs of the small girls gave me occupation. Late in the day they cried themselves to sleep.

The *velorio* (wake) that night is not much more than a blur in my mind. As always happens in such cases, black-shawled women sat around the sides of the room, waiting and wailing. Men stayed outside, leaning uncomfortably against the walls of the house. *Resadores* (readers) went over the *rosarios* and sang *alabados* (hymns) all night. About midnight the guests were served a supper of meat and chili with rice and raisins.

As for me, I had a violent headache, and the thought of food made me sick. And all the time that still white form which had been my mother lay quiet between candles.

The funeral next morning was at the church of Our Lady of Sorrows, where Mother had taken me so often, and the priest said a mass for her soul. Then began the long procession to the cemetery over on the east side of the river. When the men began to pour dirt by shovelfuls over the black box, tears came to me, but none came to my father. He was like a stranger—a wild-eyed, dry-eyed stranger. I kept thinking, “He would feel better if he could cry.”

Back at the too-quiet house, I began to realize that a whole section of my life was over. I would have to take more responsibility for Petra and Andrea. My school would never be the same. Nothing would be the same.

I felt like praying to all the saints for help—and then I remembered that Grandfather had thrown them out of the window.

I Try to Be a Man

MANY TIMES in the next months I looked longingly at the Jesuit college with its memories of the past. It seemed as if I could not bear it to be shut away from books, from teachers, from the companions that meant so much to me. But, no matter how I felt, I must take responsibility. I must be a man, whether I was ready to be or not.

My father, who was a strange man in some ways, disappeared for a long time. I suppose he could not endure Las Vegas and all its associations without my mother. I was never sure. It was no new thing, of course, for him to be away from home. When he wasn't trading or hunting, he might be freighting, or mending telegraph wires. But always before we had known approximately when he would be coming home. This time he was simply gone.

Petra, Andrea, and I looked for him every day for a while, expecting to see his pony tearing into the yard and father flinging himself into the house to fall in a heap on the bed or by the fireplace. But he did not come.

Meantime, we must eat, and I was the one who had to find the food. Don Luciano García, my grandfather, was very old and could not be expected to take care of us all—especially two little girls, four and six. My Grandmother Rendón, who had married a man named Miguel Peña, took us into her house, so that we had a roof over our heads and a place to eat and sleep. As for what we should eat—well, somehow I had to find it and I did.

Houses were being built and I worked on those. I still worked in the store of my grandfather, and I picked up whatever odd jobs I could around the *plaza*. I could easily have earned a living at gambling, but for some strange reason I had no taste for it.

Gambling was the most popular pastime in our town—that and drinking. The cross-continental railroad was being laid, and the end of the track being constructed westward was approaching Las Vegas. The law could not keep up with the mob rule that came into the country with the accompanying boom. When the railroad arrived, there would be ready markets for everything—cattle, wool, grain, hides, lumber, minerals. New settlers poured into town. Cattle thieves flourished. Billy the Kid and his outlaw companions came riding in and out of our streets. (Once after the railroad came, Billy the Kid himself spent a night in our jail.)

I remember well a certain windmill set up over a well. (When the well was blasted out, small boys loaded their popguns with the powder.) This windmill became a scaffold on which many an outlaw was hanged.

East of the Gallinas River the meadows were being cleared for new buildings. An “Anglo” population swarmed into New Town in the section where it was rumored the railroad would pass. Landholders I knew plotted their holdings into town lots and sold them at great profits. Hotels, dance halls, gambling joints, and saloons mushroomed on both sides of the river. Layouts for monte and other card games littered the sidewalks and the paths that served for sidewalks.

My boy friends gambled for buttons when they had no coins, but I had given up that months before. My father had found my pockets full of buttons. He said, “I wouldn’t do it, son.”

I knew what he meant. “But I never gamble for money,” I told him.

“But if you keep on fooling with the game at all, you will play for money, sooner or later. It’s no use to you this habit.”

I was glad enough to quit. As a matter of fact, I had played for

money on two occasions. Once I won a quarter; once I lost fifteen cents. On both occasions I broke out in a nervous cold sweat and had called myself a coward. While I had been congratulating myself on my success with buttons, yet it was a relief to have done with the whole business.

Now, after my mother's death, I could have turned my knowledge of cards to good account. But I said to myself, "No, Mother hated gambling and so does Father. It makes me ill. Whether I win or lose, it makes me ill. I would rather work with my hands." And so I did.

Meantime the end-of-track came nearer and nearer. Once the rumor spread that a train was coming in, and everybody including me went rushing like mad things over to the station. But that was only a false alarm.

On the Fourth of July, 1879, the engine of the Santa Fé train actually puffed into town, and we had a wild celebration.

When the track to Albuquerque was completed, Father Salvadore Personé, president of the Jesuit College (a man I thought looked like the pictures of George Washington and whom his associates called "The Banisher of Sadness"), invited me to go with the boarding students of the school on an excursion to Albuquerque. I went off telling my grandfather that I was going to ride only to Santa Fé. The small lie grew heavy on my conscience, but for all that I had a wonderful time. The priests gave us each a glass of native wine, and all that afternoon I saw the sun in the east.

We arrived in the city after dark and rode to the convent in wagons—my wagon being hitched to a pair of very lazy mules. We passed tents of various sizes, in which I could catch glimpses of men and women dancing.

At the convent we were fed and entertained by a program to which we listened on benches placed in front of the church. One priest had composed a song in our honor, "*O juventud escogida de la ciudad de Las Vegas*" (O chosen youth of the City of Las Vegas).

The next morning a one-armed man shot off a cannon for

our benefit and to our honor. Then we were taken to see the Rio Grande, which happened to be running high. Beside it, the Gallinas River, though far more of a river than it is today, seemed small indeed. To my greater admiration, I saw huge sacks of wool being ferried in boats across the stream and loaded into wagons on the far side. Neither the Atlantic nor the Pacific Oceans, both of which I saw in later years, made such an impression upon me as my first sight of the Rio Grande.

That was my last excursion and almost my last contact with the Jesuit college.

I am sorry to say that my chief business became the selling of liquor. That was what made the profit in my Grandfather Garcia's store, and that was what put food into the mouths of my small sisters. Selling whiskey seemed to me better than cheating at cards. At least men were not obliged to buy the stuff unless they chose. For some reason I never liked it myself—even the smell of it—and that is no credit to me.

When my grandmother died—it must have been in 1883—the news somehow traveled over devious routes until my father heard it. As suddenly as he had disappeared, he returned, riding home on a pony, as he had ridden away. He helped us move from my grandmother's house to another very small one on what is now Chávez Street. We opened a store, stocked it with staples, but particularly with liquor, and worked up a small trade.

Meantime, though I was scarcely aware of it, Mr. Perea had become a minister, but he was not preaching in Las Vegas. With the coming of the Jesuits his trading post had been boycotted, and little by little his interests had drifted away from the neighborhood. (He was sent by the great pioneer missionary organizer, Sheldon Jackson, first into Lincoln County, where the famous Lincoln County War with the outlaw gang was just beginning, then to Jemez Pueblo among the Indians, and then to Zuni. He married a mission teacher, whom he met in the home of John Annin.)

The Annins, thoroughly discouraged, had left Las Vegas in

April 1880. The Rev. John C. Eastman, who followed in June of the same year, finding only five church members remaining and the mission school grounds turned into cattle pens, decided to concentrate his work on the east side of the river, where so many Anglo settlers were coming in. His new church building was dedicated in October, 1881. He organized several mission schools, as well as supervising the growing mission churches to the north—Agua Negra, El Rito, Mora, Buena Vista, and others. When he left, in November, 1882, however, I had not even known him.

Dr. James Fraser, who followed Mr. Eastman, I did know, and it is partly because of him that my life turned out as it did.

New Friends—New Ambition

I WONDER WHAT would have happened if my life had taken another turning in those years just after my Grandmother Rendón died. What if I had not sent my sister Petra to Miss Speakman's school? What if Miss Speakman and Mr. Fraser had not taken so great an interest in me? What if John Whitlock had not been sent to work in Las Vegas? What if I had never entered a certain trading establishment on a certain day, or read a certain book? If not—well, I would not now be working on this chapter!

Mr. Fraser brought to Las Vegas with him, as well as his young wife, her girlhood chum, Miss Annie M. (Anna Mary) Speakman. She was to reopen the school that Mr. Annin had started and given up in despair. This tall clear-eyed, black-haired young woman, once a Quaker, had been persuaded into the Presbyterian way of thinking by Mr. Fraser's preaching in Philadelphia.

Miss Speakman had a discouraging task. She found the schoolroom inch-deep in dust, desks battered, books torn, windows broken—and prospective pupils few. Mr. Fraser helped set the schoolhouse in order. She herself hunted for children.

She managed to find me because my name was in Mr. Annin's old roll book, and I was living near the school. She earnestly tried to persuade me to come back to school. That was impossible, I told her. I was too old. How would I look, a great nineteen-year-old, among her primary pupils? Besides, I was in business now, at this time selling wood. My sister Petra might

go to the school, I said. Petra had entered the girls' school held by the Sisters of Loretto. She had learned reading and the catechism, nothing more. Yes, Petra might go.

Petra learned quickly in Miss Speakman's school, and I began to pour over the books she brought home at night. Not that she really needed to study at night — out of pride she brought the books to show me. Before a year was over, I realized with dismay that I could not understand those books. I could not work half her arithmetic problems. I could not spell half the words in her spelling lessons. Her English books were almost in a foreign language. Petra was ahead of me!

I remembered with a lump in my throat the glory of my first commencement at the Jesuit school. I had not looked foolish then, but how would I look now, almost a grown man, in the class behind Petra?

I could go to school, my father said, if I wanted to. He could manage the store if I would help after classes. If I wanted to — that was the question. Oh, I wanted the books; I even had a hunger for them, but I was ashamed of my years. I was ashamed to go back to the Jesuit school so far behind my old classmates, and besides it was about to be closed. (It was moved to Colorado in 1884.) Yet I decided that if Miss Speakman asked me again I would, after all, say yes instead of no.

She did ask me again. I might be in some of Petra's classes, she told me, but I could advance mostly at my own speed. She would try to give me some extra coaching. I decided to try it, at least for a few months.

In the school I found the books rather hard and I almost despaired of English. In fact, I could see little use in learning it. I respected Miss Speakman's teaching, however, and she treated me with great patience.

One day, after I had been in school several months, with a group of my friends I dropped into a store on Chávez Street, hanging around the counter to pass the time. Suddenly a man pushed through the knot of us, elbowing us out of his way. He was waving a paper toward the proprietor. Reaching the

counter, he thrust the paper across, keeping one hand on the corner of it. By craning my neck I could see that it was an order blank.

"Can you fill out this paper for me?" he asked, running his tongue over his lips, "*por favor, en inglés* (in English, please)?"

In English! We stood around attentively while the shopkeeper found pen and ink, smoothed out the order form, dipped the pen, and held it poised over those blank spaces. Would he be able to fill them up—in English?

Carefully, with painstaking labor, the man moved his pen to shape letters. A boy prodded me, exclaiming, "*Mira, hombre, está en inglés!* (Look, man, it is in English!)"

A sharp thought went through my mind, sending the perspiration down the back of my neck. Suppose the man had come to me, instead of to this shopkeeper, saying, "Write this order for me, please, *en inglés*." I could not do it. For the life of me, I could not do it.

I left the store and walked away quickly, holding up my head with new determination. I would learn English now. Nothing should stop me. "Even if they jeer at me," I told myself, "I am going to study that English language until I learn to write it, and even to speak it, to some extent."

Surely Miss Speakman, and her new assistant, Miss Gerlinger, must have noticed in me astonishing signs of ambition, but I did not tell them what had caused my sudden interest in English.

At the school I came to know Mr. Fraser, the pastor, who often came over (the river was bridged now) for our chapel services. However, I confess that the one I looked forward to most eagerly was not Mr. Fraser, but a man he introduced to us, one who spoke to us in our own Spanish language and gave us Spanish tracts to read. His name was John (Juan) Whitlock.

I am tempted to tell you much about this man, who was to become my "father in the gospel." His father, who had been one of the first doctors in the army, had married a Mexican wife, Josefa Lucero. The manner of Dr. Whitlock's death lent

the whole family an air of glamour. The doctor had accused a certain Captain Creighton stationed at Fort Stanton of treacherous dealings with the Indians and had been challenged to a duel. He shot the captain, whose company, in retaliation, riddled the doctor's body with bullets. Juan, fourteen years old, had been away in a Kentucky school at the time.

When Juan came back from school, he found his mother married to a man in Agua Negra (Holman), who had been his father's business partner in a sawmill. His new stepfather, James Holman, was a Methodist. (He gave the land on which the Holman mission school is built.) Juan, free to choose his religion, was influenced by Mr. Holman and completely converted by one of Mr. Eastman's sermons. He began to argue on religious topics, and debated with Roman Catholics in the county seat at Mora.

At the time I first knew him, Mr. Whitlock, then past thirty, had become a colporteur for the Presbyterian Board of Publication, riding over trails Mr. Perea and Rafael Gallegos had marked out in Río Arriba, Mora, and San Miguel Counties, selling Bibles and Testaments, and distributing tracts. The tracts were frankly anti-Roman Catholic and disturbed the priests, who collected them—if they could find them—as fast as Mr. Whitlock scattered them. Not all of them were found, however, for they were small and easily tucked out of sight. One priest collected Protestant literature and Bibles and had a public burning of them at Agua Negra.

Now, looking back, I see that the Protestant Reformation, three hundred years behind the Reformation in Europe, was taking root in New Mexico. It took root, just as it does everywhere, when the common people begin to look for themselves into the pages of the Book and read for themselves the simple message of the Gospel. The prayers of José Ynez Perea were being answered at last.

But I must go back to my own story.

Mr. Whitlock's wanderings brought him often to Las Vegas, where his supplies were constantly arriving by train. He and

Mr. Fraser became warm friends. Both of them were fond of people—fonder, I think, than of theories and theologies—and both of them loved the Spanish Americans. The time came when Mr. Whitlock was appointed assistant to Mr. Fraser, with special responsibility for the work in Old Town. He was, if possible, to revive Mr. Annin's church. His new work brought him near the school, and he often led our chapel services.

This well groomed young man with the trim whiskers and the warm brown eyes, was one of the best storytellers I have ever known. Sometimes at chapel he seemed to be talking to me directly, and I was irresistibly drawn to him. At recess periods, although he usually had a bevy of small boys about him, I sometimes came close to him and was thrilled when he spoke a few words to me. His stories and Miss Speakman's interpretation of them gave me an entirely new idea of the Bible. I was convinced by what the priests had told me that the Bible spoke the truth. Now I got an idea concerning the nature of that truth, and it was exciting.

I had long been out of the habit of going regularly to mass. Now and then, however, I went to early mass on Sunday and then to Miss Speakman's Sabbath school. Petra always went to the Sabbath school and she seemed to like it when I would go with her. Yet I was not greatly impressed with it, I must confess, and it never occurred to me that I would ever be anything but a Roman Catholic.

One day Señor Juan, as we affectionately called Mr. Whitlock, came to my desk after his chapel talk and handed me a plain-covered, innocent looking book. "I brought this especially for you," he said. "I believe it has a message that may fit your experience. Will you read it carefully, Gabino?"

"Thank you, Señor Juan," I said. With my eyes I promised to read it, but for the present I tucked it away with my other books. There was no hurry, I thought. It looked rather long, and I hoped it wasn't hard. At any rate, it was Spanish and not English. *La Biblia Prestada* was the title on the cover. *The Borrowed Bible*.

Turning Point

NO VOICE said to me, "Look out, Gabino! If you read this book the whole course of your life will be changed." If the voice had spoken would I have read the book anyway? I suppose so. At any rate, I did read it.

The story was simple enough. Benito, the hero, was a boy in an Irish Catholic family whose father raised vegetables in the country. Benito took them to town every day for sale to a local grocer.

The grocer was notorious for having in his possession a Bible, which he kept on a shelf in the store. Benito, more and more curious about the contents of the Book, managed to borrow it without his family's knowledge and read it secretly. Since his mother felt Bible reading to be a sin, his father considered all reading a waste of time, and as his younger brothers and sisters were continually under foot, his difficulties were many. However, he persevered and, in spite of all his troubles, finished the New Testament.

One verse hounded and haunted him. He picked peas and pulled carrots to the rhythm of it and whenever he closed his eyes he saw the words of it in letters of living fire: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."

Benito had always believed that there were many ways to the Father Omnipotent — through prescribed "Hail Marys" and *paternósters*, through prayers to various saints, through confessions to the priest, and regular attendance at mass. Now that

he had met Jesus himself in the pages of the Book, he saw all these things through different eyes. Christ Jesus himself was the Way.

Benito thought that only priests knew the truth. It was beyond common folk like him. Now he found that Jesus Christ himself *was* the Truth. And Jesus, so the Book said, was impatient with prayers said by rote. He quarreled with priests and turned upside down their notions of rank and position. What was within the simplest person mattered more than all the temple rites; the poor were better off than the rich, the meek would outlive the powerful. Benito's whole world of ideas was turned topsy-turvy.

And Christ Jesus was also the life, having given his own life as "a ransom for many."

Because he had to have help, Benito hunted out the little Protestant chapel and visited it again and again. He could not do this entirely in secret, and one night he came home to find his whole family bitterly set against him. Neighbors—informers—were gathered at his house to sneer at him and curse him.

"You are no longer my son!" his mother wailed.

"Let's stone him out of the village!" cried one of the neighbors; and his own brothers took up the cry.

"Will you give up this heretical belief, or will you not?" his father demanded, "Yes or no?"

"I will not," said Benito.

His mother stormed that he must leave home. The neighbors threatened to stone him for good measure.

Benito looked into his father's eyes and saw that his father did not hate him—only he was sorry. And Benito said, "I'll go. Only give me until tonight to get my belongings. I'll take only what I have earned."

After nightfall, Benito's father loaded two revolvers and put them into his pockets. "You'll have to go son," he said, "but for a few miles I'm going with you. I hate to have a son of mine a heretic, but I cannot hate my own son. And they shall not molest you except over my dead body. Come!" Without even

saying good-by to his mother, Benito followed his father out into the darkness. This verse went with him, so that he had no fear: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." There was light ahead.

By the time I had finished this story, I was no longer reading *about* Benito. I *was* Benito. For a moment I felt that my own father walked beside me, the pistols in his pockets. Then I knew that I was alone. I was terribly alone.

In spite of myself, the tears came up into my eyes and spilled over—hot tears of dismay. I—Gabino Rendón—had to be a *protestante*.

The word was still hateful to me. It was a word of reproach, a word men spat out. Oh, some few Protestants were worthy men—Don Ynez Perea, Rafael Gallegos, Señor Juan—but not I. It was impossible. But in my heart, I knew that I was already a Protestant.

"Oh, no!" I said, fighting the tears that came smarting and brimming over. Even though I must cry like this—a grown man, crying!—I will never become a *protestante*. *O María Santissima*—Holy Mary, what shall I do? *Dios Padre Omnipotente*—Father Almighty—what shall I do?"

I thought of my mother, taking me to "make the stations" in the church of Our Lady of Sorrows, listening while I read the *novenas* to her, day after day. I thought of my first communion and the quiet confessional. I thought of the Jesuit school and the priests who had been my friends. My memories pulled me in one direction—my convictions in another. And the tears! They would not stop coming, and I brushed them angrily from my eyes.

How could I tell my father? The very thought turned me hot and cold. My father was not, as my mother had been, "a good Catholic." He was a great admirer of Don Ynez Perea, and he had often spoken out against abuses among the priests; but still the term "Protestant" was distasteful to him. No, I could not tell him. When I faced that necessity I knew I had already made up my mind. I *was* a Protestant, even against my will.

Jesus Christ had become for me "the way, the truth, and the life."

For days I tried to screw up courage to tell my father but I could find no opening. We could speak of the weather, the illness of neighbors, the news of the town, the business of the store. But I could not say casually, "By the way, Father, I have just become a Protestant." I could not say it at all.

I decided to write it as a confession and let Petra deliver the note. I wrote a page, tore it up, wrote it again. Finally I had a version I dared to entrust to Petra.

When my father read the note, he was not such a coward but called me into the store to answer it face to face.

"I have known for a long time," he said, "that the Protestants are right. Yet I don't want you to be one. You are sure to be hated. I saw what happened to Don Ynez Perea. He suffered insults by the dozen. Small wonder he has gone to work elsewhere. I know what happened to Rafael Gallegos. His eagerness to preach is not the only reason he left Las Vegas.

"Now you will be *aborrecido* (despised) because you are a Protestant, and I will be despised because I am the father of a Protestant. I tell you, I don't want that to happen."

"I don't want it to happen, either," I said. "I'm sorry. I can't help it. I can't help thinking the way I think."

We were both miserable, although we understood each other. Finally my father said, "But I shall not do as other fathers have done when their sons became Protestants. They turned them out of their homes. Not I. My house is your house, and, Protestant or not, you will always be my son."

I thanked him and turned away for fear he might see my treacherous tears. It comforted me to know that my father—like Benito's—would not disown me. This thing that had come between us, had, after all, drawn us closer together.

It was not so hard to tell Miss Speakman, Mr. Fraser, and Mr. Whitlock of my decision to be a Protestant. They began to talk at once of my "joining the church." I must be examined by the session, they said, and make a public confession of my faith.

I must admit that all this talk made me thoroughly impatient. In my heart I was already a member of their church. What did all this formality matter? Yet I could see that they were happy, too. I was a sign to them that their missions were succeeding.

When I was just twenty-one years and one month old (March, 1885), I became a member of the church in the Old Town. Mr. Fraser asked me the questions necessary, and I answered clearly, "I do. I do." I could feel that Miss Speakman was proud of me. So were Mr. Fraser and Mr. Whitlock, who was beside him on the platform. But I was not proud of myself. I had wasted my first twenty-one years. And so, while Mr. Fraser prayed for me—quite a long prayer—I prayed for myself:

"O Lord, I have one request to make of thee. Twenty-one years of my life have passed already, and they have been of no use to thee. Give me, I pray thee, twenty-one years more in which to love and serve thee with all my heart. Twenty-one years more, if it please thee, O God. Amen"

As Mr. Fraser came to his *Amen* aloud, and I to mine in the silence of my heart, the sound of splintering glass crashed through the church. Some one of those who had once been my friends had thrown a stone through the window and the shutter.

Cost of a New Faith

WHEN I JOINED the church, I made one mental reservation: I would still go on praying to the Virgin Mary. All the rest of my old religion I could give up—but not Our Lady. “Love her without fear,” my mother had told me, “and pray to her every day. She will take your prayers straight to the Father Omnipotent. For who are we, poor ones, that we should approach the Almighty God?” Yes, I loved the Mother Mary, she understood me, and I could not honestly give her up.

I need not tell Miss Speakman this, nor Mr. Fraser, nor even Mr. Whitlock. Our Lady would understand, and the matter lay entirely between myself and Her.

But one day Miss Speakman sent me to visit a meeting of presbytery at the church in New Town. I was president of a club we had formed in our school, and she said the presbytery meeting would help me learn how to conduct business according to Robert’s Rules of Order.

Embarrassed, as usual, in the presence of strangers, and feeling much out of place, I slipped into the back seat of the church where ministers and elders were gathering. They looked important and dignified, and I was impressed. I had not realized that so many Protestants existed!

Passing out tracts to visitors was a small quiet man whom I afterwards knew better. His name was Mr. Vicente F. Romero and he was the son of Father Martínez of Taos. Father Martínez was a progressive priest who had brought the first printing press into New Mexico and established the first coeducational

school. He had broken with the Roman Church after the coming of the French priests and would have been an Episcopalian had there been such a church in our part of the world. He had also married, and his children, who had taken their mother's name, Romero, were among the first Protestants in the territory. Vicente had become a licensed evangelist.

While the opening business of the presbytery proceeded, I glanced over the tract Mr. Romero had given me. Some of it made little impression on me, and anyway I was reading it with only half my mind. Suddenly a sentence in italics caught my eye and captured my complete attention: "*There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. I Timothy 2:5.*"

I could not believe those lines. I could not believe that the Bible actually made such a statement. "One mediator—the man Christ Jesus." I read it again and again. It seemed to me that the letters stood out from the page in lines of fire. Someone who wrote the tract must have made a mistake. Such words could not be in the Bible. If they were—well, then Christ, not Mary, must be the mediator between me and the Father.

Forgetting all about the club presidency and Robert's Rules of Order, forgetting all about Miss Speakman and the brethren in the meeting, I stumbled out of the church and hurried back to my house in Old Town, running nearly all the way.

The house was empty. Petra and Andrea were at school, my father at work. Breathlessly I hunted in my Bible—one Miss Speakman had given me—until I found I Timothy 2:5. When I found the verse, I hardly dared look at it, hoping against hope that the words beating in my brain would not be there. But, yes, alas, they were there, looking out at me from the pages of the Book. All the system of thought I had built up around the Virgin Mother was attacked in those few words. The statement was here, in the Bible.

It never occurred to me to question the truth of the Holy Writ. Whatever was there was true. It took me some time to recover from the shock of finding that verse. Then, very reluc-

tantly, but with complete finality, I set the Virgin down from her pedestal and made the Son the center of my worship. My whole inner life had been turned upside down, but when it was righted again I was strangely satisfied.

My father was right about my being despised for becoming a Protestant. Men friends and girl friends alike began to ignore me. Even Father Fede, my former teacher, refused to speak to me when I met him once in a doctor's office. That hurt me, but I was fond of him just the same.

People began to stop trading at our store. The truth is that I prayed for the store to fail, I was so much ashamed of selling the liquor in it. It did fail, and for the first time in my life I knew what it meant to be actually hungry.

I got myself a job replacing ties along the railroad, with as rough a gang as they make. From the time I was sixteen or thereabouts, I had worked on the railroad at odd times. I had laid many a tie and driven many a spike in the stretch of track to the south of Las Vegas and on the Hot Springs branch. I did not drink nor gamble like most of the men, but my language was as rough as any. Now after my conversion, there was a difference.

The half hour or twenty minutes we had for ourselves between the noon lunch and one o'clock I would spend reading a good book instead of joining in the usual dirty jokes. Once the gang threatened to give me a "good licking." I don't remember what I said to them, but whatever it was caused a few men to take my side, and the fight never came off. If it had, it would have been a matter of six to one—and the one would have had the worst of it.

I had a strong feeling that I should do more than *be* a Protestant—I should try to spread my new faith. That, however, was hard, since my old companions would have nothing to do with me.

One day I set out on horseback down the Gallinas River toward the village of Los Valles with a package of tracts. I had made up my mind to give one to each person I met. However,

I completely lost my courage to do so. And it seemed to me that I could not bear to dismount, knock at doors, and speak to strangers face to face. I was overcome by an agony of shyness.

"Am I ashamed of my message?" I asked myself. No! No! But it was awkward to say to persons I had never before met, "Look, I have found the true religion. It is what you would call heresy!" That was too hard.

And so instead of leaving my tracts by twos and threes at the doors of houses or distributing them to people along the road, I let the whole bunch drop from the saddle, praying that somebody would find them and be helped by them.

Years afterwards I learned that the women of that neighborhood had picked up the tracts, sewed them together, and kept them to the end of their lives. They fell into the hands of the Madrid family. Albino Madrid, the blacksmith, had traded an old Spanish speller and primer for a Bible found by a traveler along the Santa Fé Trail. He and his family had been reading the Book and attending a few Protestant meetings in Las Vegas. The tracts helped in the final step of their conversion. Manuel Madrid, nephew of the blacksmith, became a minister some years later — and became my brother-in-law, too. But I am getting ahead of my story.

In March, 1886, I was elected an elder in the Spanish Presbyterian Church, and was ordained—set aside to the office by the laying on of hands.

That was the year when the mission school was turned into a boarding school, and although I did not know it, romance was coming toward me from a most unexpected quarter.

Amelia

IT SEEMS QUEER to say this, but if the school in Las Vegas had not become a boarding school, I would never have married the woman I did.

It was like this: Mr. Fraser resigned his position as pastor of the so-called First Church (it really is the second, but the Spanish church is called Second) to become supervisor of the missions and to make the day school in Old Town into a boarding school. For some time he had felt that the best way to strengthen the work among the Spanish-speaking people was to strengthen mission schools among them. Since the coming of the railroad had turned Las Vegas into a fast growing city, he felt it was a strategic place for a boarding school and wrote dozens of letters to New York headquarters urging the change. Finally the Board of Home Missions was convinced that he was wise and set the machinery in motion for enlarging the Las Vegas school to include boarding students.

A number of additions had to be made to the staff of teachers and helpers at the new school. Among them was a young woman from New York City whose name was Amelia Brill. Amelia, although she could have taught music or Bible very well, was made supervisor of the kitchen.

Mr. Fraser had met her and her mother on a train ride when he was full of plans for the boarding department.

"If you ever need me," Amelia had said in her fine, rich voice, "just send for me and I'll come!"

He had remembered her words and when the need arose had

sent for her. Her sister Lavinia came also to take charge of the laundry.

I cannot tell of our first meeting. Perhaps it was in church, where Amelia played the organ. But I know that when I looked at her a curious thrill went through me; and I know that when she looked at me she blushed. I was at the time running a delivery wagon for a man who had a feed store on Bridge Street and was sent to deliver some furniture for "the Brill girls." How could I know that that furniture would some day be mine!

When Amelia joined our church (the session minutes say it was in April, 1887) Mr. Whitlock and I were the elders who "examined" her.

I found excuses to speak to her often and eventually we told each other all our life histories. She liked to talk of her ancestors, especially on her mother's side. Her father had been a butcher in Wellsborough, a town near Philadelphia, but he had died some time before Amelia came west. Her mother had been a Wagner, of the family of the great composer. From Germany her family had gone to Italy, where she had become a favorite with the prelate who later had become Pope Pius IX. She had even sat on his lap and played with the fringe on his vesture and his heavy rings! But she had read the Bible for herself and stored it in memory, and the reading had brought her to a Protestant way of thinking. In Amelia's family were musicians, artists, artisans, and professional men. Her mother was trained in elocution and gave beautiful readings.

I tried to match Amelia's stories with tales of my own ancestry, so different from hers. I told her of my great-grandfather, Rafael Rendón of Santa Fé, who had been one of the first cloth-makers in the New World. I enlarged on the stories of my grandfather, Miguel Rendón, and his adventures with the Indians. I spoke, with much false modesty, of my ancestors on my mother's side—the Garcías, de Bacas, and Luceros—all names of distinction in the early history of the Southwest.

Then we talked about ourselves. I found my English rapidly improving and I taught her a little Spanish.

For two years, we "walked together."

Amelia was handsome and carried herself proudly. To me she seemed more beautiful than Miss Laura Annin had been to my boyish eyes. When she put on her best dress of billowing silk, she was no longer "kitchen matron." She was Miss Brill—Miss Amelia—Amelia—and, unbelievably, dear Amelia! She was grace and loveliness itself.

I began to dream of her in more ways than one—and I have reason to believe that she dreamed of me. However, with all her pride, she could not marry the driver of a delivery truck, or a man who drove spikes on a railroad. She had high ambitions for the one who would be her husband, and I did not fit into them. On my side, I had always expected to marry a girl who spoke my own language and shared my own background. We lived in a state of delicious uncertainty, but we could not stay apart.

If I could be a missionary or a preacher, she *might* marry me. That seemed most unlikely, but at any rate, I must prove myself. I did so by opening a mission school at Golondrinas.

The picturesque *plaza* (village) of Golondrinas lay between pines in the hill country to the north of Las Vegas. It seemed to Mr. Fraser and to Rafael Gallegos, who was preaching at a nearby point (Buena Vista), a promising place to attempt a mission school. They asked me to teach in it, and I, who was so far from being a trained teacher, said I would try. I said it with many misgivings, but with deep desire to do something for the Lord. And if I did it well enough, Amelia might marry me!

My father and I started out for the hills to the north in an old lumber wagon to which were hitched two lean and hungry-looking horses. In the back was my trunk, filled with a few books and fewer clothes. Also, there were the desks, the old-fashioned homemade ones at which John Annin's pupils had studied and which Miss Speakman had discarded. In my pocket was my only monetary wealth, a solitary shabby dime.

Ten cents was not much to tide me over until my salary began to arrive from the mysterious "Board," but I felt exalted in

my poverty, saying over to myself the verse from Scripture: "Carry neither purse, nor scrip . . . for the labourer is worthy of his hire."

I was glad my father was willing to go with me. It showed that he had faith in me, and even in my religion. He would take the horses and wagon back to Las Vegas, and he would see the place where my real work was to begin. It was August, 1888.

Since we were not familiar with the road, we were obliged to ask for directions at several points along the road. The sun was already setting behind Mora Peaks when our tired horses plodded into Golondrinas, the "village of the swallows." But none of the houses would open to us. The men-folk were away working, the women said, and they would not take in strange men for the night. I said I was a mission teacher, but that meant little to them, and I felt hurt and humiliated.

At last we found a woman who was willing at least to let us unload my trunk and the desks beside her door. We lightened the wagon so, and drove wearily from this inhospitable village, heading the horses toward Buena Vista where we had friends, Rafael Gallegos and a rancher named Laumbach.

Night moved toward us more quickly than we could drive and caught us in between. We stopped at a lonely sheep ranch, where the owner took a liking to us and let us stay. In the morning he gave us breakfast. Later I was able to repay him by filling out an order blank for him in English.

The Laumbachs had a ranch hidden in a *cañoncito*. The patriarch of the family had come from Germany, married a Spanish wife, and set up an extensive estate. He was a Protestant and the mainstay of Rafael Gallegos' congregation.

Next day, while my father took the horses and wagon back to Las Vegas, Pedro Laumbach lent me a young horse scarcely broken to the saddle, and on the back of this frisky animal, with Rafael Gallegos as a guide, I went into Golondrinas again. With his help, I managed to rent a room at ten dollars a month—on faith—and find a building for my schoolhouse.

This building was given rent-free by a man named Manuel

Barcelón. It was a one-room adobe structure with two windows. All the window panes were broken. I sent to Mr. Fraser for more glass and put it in myself.

There was no use in trying to open school at once, for no children could come while crops were still being gathered. September was well advanced before I called the first class, in which three pupils were enrolled. But by the first of October I had twenty-five.

Not all of them learned much, I must admit, but among them was little Cipriano Barcelón, who drank up learning like a thirsty young colt.

Cipriano's father, Manuel, used to stay after school to talk with me, and we read the Bible together. One day he said to me, "I believe as you do!" I was deeply thankful, for I had made one convert. Now I was "father in the gospel" to him. Mr. Fraser would be glad—and so would Amelia. (Mr. Barcelón became an evangelist, and his family are staunch church members to this day.)

I rented a piece of land near my school and an adobe house like my neighbors'. In the spring I planted some crops around it, and some of them grew.

In July, I married Amelia.

We were married in the church in Old Las Vegas. Amelia's sister was the bridesmaid, and Charlie Holman was the best man. (Charlie Holman was John Whitlock's son, adopted by his grandparents when his mother died.)

Amelia wore a gown of white merino, and I thought she looked like a princess. Mr. Fraser took charge of the ceremony, and I repeated the sacred promises after him in a sort of trance. It did not seem possible that this was happening to me!

The mission rooms were full of flowers for the reception. The wedding cakes, made by Amelia herself, with the help of Lavinia and Petra, were as fine as any caterer could have baked. It was a beautiful wedding.

Golondrinas

I TOOK MY BRIDE to Golondrinas and we moved into the little adobe house I had rented. We brought along her furniture, which helped make it seem homelike for her. The village—*plaza*, we called it—was a primitive place for a woman like Amelia, as I well knew, but since she had the mind of a missionary she made the best of it. I remember, however, how wistful she was as she packed away in a trunk her billowing wedding dress. There would be no occasion to wear white merino in Golondrinas.

We had been in the village only a few weeks when Amelia became ill with typhoid fever. I took her to Las Vegas where she stayed until she was well enough to be moved. When I could not be with her, her sister Lavinia was her nurse. She lost in that illness the long black hair that had made such a fine braid to coil around her head.

No doubt a novelist would make a great story of that first year of our married life, but I am not a novelist. Of course we had many adjustments to make, coming from different cultures and speaking different languages. In Las Vegas there were English-speaking friends for Amelia, but not in Golondrinas. Las Vegas was a growing nineteenth century city, but Golondrinas was a sleepy village which might as well have been set down in the Middle Ages.

Seeing things through Amelia's eyes I noticed much that otherwise I would have taken for granted. She was interested in watching the women "mudding" the outside of their houses,

spreading a coat of fine wet earth over the adobe bricks; taking all the meager furnishings into the yard when they cleaned, washing their inside walls with whitewash made from native soil, sweeping smooth their hard-packed earthen floors and dooryards with short brooms made of native straw tied in bundles.

Amelia had her own ideas of cooking, many of which were new to me. She learned to prepare some native dishes. However, we could not get, even if we had had the money to pay for them, the ingredients for the kind of meals she would have liked to cook. We had no vegetables but beans and edible weeds such as lamb's-quarters and sheep sorrel which were cooked like spinach; very seldom beef or pork. We had cow's milk for I soon bought a cow. We ate plenty of fish, abundant in the Mora River, and wild duck. In the summer came the chokecherries, growing wild along the streams, so good for jelly and jam. And in the fall we went with our neighbors to gather piñon nuts, rich and nourishing for winter food.

Amelia was shocked at some of the medicines in common use. Ground sunflower stalk mixed with ashes was rubbed on open sores, tags from tobacco cans were pasted on the forehead to cure headaches, and a saint's image tucked in bed beside a patient was supposed to hasten a cure. A blue bead tied around a baby's neck would keep away the evil eye, and one had to be careful about witches.

The women were shy at first, but once they had accepted my wife, were gracious and friendly, and she was fond of them and of their children.

There was little social life in the *plaza*, except the celebrations for saints' days, in which we could take no part. Each village in the region had its own patron saint and therefore its own fiesta days, to which people came from other *plazas*. Incidentally, my pupils missed many days of school because of such occasions.

But in winter when the harvest was ended and the *plaza* marooned by mud and snow, the long nights were whiled away

by playing *cañute*. It was ordinarily a gambling game, but we modified it so that, when it was played at our house or our friends' houses, it was just good fun. Penalties were paid out in grains of corn and the losers rewarded the winners with a treat of apples. The game takes its name from the *cañuto*, which means the section of cane between two joints. The "cane" was a wooden cylinder with a hole bored into it, and the point of the game was to guess in which one of four canes a bit of iron was hidden, the guesser trying to find it in the third cane he lifted. All the contesting players were divided into two sides, often men against women, one side holding the canes and the other side choosing a player to guess where the iron was hidden.

Rivalry, though friendly, was keen, whipped up by rival songs which accompanied every move. These songs were often made up as the game proceeded and would grow in interest. Some of them were usually a bit off-color, but at our house we were careful about that. Around midnight all the players would join in singing,

Cañutero, yes, cañutero, no,
Sing prettily, for already dawn is upon you.

Religiously, the people of Golondrinas were sadly neglected. There was no resident priest, and unless the people traveled many miles they had no chance to hear mass. Marriages were somewhat loose, because of distance from the priest and his high prices, and often baptisms were too long postponed.

The lay order of the *Hermanos Penitentes* (Penitent Brothers) was strong, however. During Lent the members had special ceremonies, making long pilgrimages to hilltop crosses, grinding gravel into their knees, or whipping their bare backs until the blood ran freely. When boys were about twelve years old they were initiated into this brotherhood (a perverted remnant of the Third Order of St. Francis). Part of the initiation consisted of cuttings along the back with pieces of flint and sharp glass. On the walls of our own house were spots of Penitente blood. Even whitewash failed to keep them from showing.

The *Penitentes* had never understood—many of them would never understand—God’s mercy and loving kindness. They had no joy in a living Lord.

We held Sunday services and a few of the families of my school children came. Manuel Barcelón became my right-hand assistant. We had an organ, and Amelia’s fine voice was always a help with the hymns. She found it easier to sing Spanish than to speak it.

Sometimes we made the long wagon trip to Las Vegas to visit the Frasers and bring back supplies. Toward the end of the year we drove very carefully, for Amelia was going to have a child.

Late in the summer the child was born, a little girl. We named her Ruth and we shocked all the neighbors by refusing to bind her tight in swaddling bands.

On to Del Norte

IN THE SUMMER after we were married a training school was opened for "local evangelists" in a place called Santa Barbara (now Rodarte), near Chamisal and Peñasco. These are mountain villages not far from Dixon. Amelia insisted that I go, in spite of the fact that we had a small baby to think about. "You will not be gone long," she said, "and I want you to get ahead."

"I may not be able to pass the courses," I said.

She flared up at that. "But of course you can, Gabino! You have brains to match the best of them. I know, or I wouldn't have married you! And you are not going all your life tagged as a country schoolteacher or an untrained local evangelist. You'll go." And I went.

The school was a stimulating experience. I heard good lectures. And learned something about organizing sermons. I had a chance to practice in some critical situations. One time, for instance, two other young men my own age, Manuel Madrid and José Vigil, and I had attempted to hold a service in a house where a Catholic christening had already been scheduled. Manuel and I were too much abashed to proceed, but Mr. Vigil "opened his mouth boldly."

Manuel Madrid had joined our church in Las Vegas and had been a pupil in the boarding school there. He it was who told me what had happened to the tracts I scattered in Los Valles. José Vigil was a new friend, vigorous and energetic, with more common sense than most of us. He had been the

"bad boy" in the school at Mora and almost expelled for running away to a dance. However, his teacher, Miss Elizabeth Craig, had so much faith in him that he was allowed to stay. She was responsible for his character, in the same way as Miss Speakman was for mine.

At Santa Barbara we heard of a new offer of education for the ministry opening up at Del Norte in southern Colorado. The College of the Southwest, so we were told, was adding to its curriculum a seminary course for young men like us, who might earn part of our way by preaching. Here we might catch up on college subjects and add theology. It was a tempting opportunity.

And yet how could I go? I couldn't ask Amelia to move so soon. There was the baby to think of. My crops were unharvested. The mission school must be carried on. What would I do with Petra and Andrea, who had come to live with us? All the way home I told myself it was impossible.

I talked it over frankly with Amelia. Her head was more practical than mine, and I relied on her judgment. Over the pink bundle she was holding, her level eyes met mine.

"Baby or no baby, we'll go!" she cried. "The longer we put off your schooling, the more difficult it will be to get it. We'll manage somehow—for you are going to be a real minister, Gabino. I won't have it otherwise."

"And the crops? The mission school?"

"We'll gather as much of the crops as we can. As for the school—well, we'll ask Mr. Fraser."

What a woman I had married!

We did harvest the crops, with the help of Manuel Madrid, and sold most of the produce for a good price. That helped. Mr. Fraser advised discontinuing the school, saying that my training was of greater importance just then. We decided we would all go to Colorado—Petra and Andrea included. It would be an adventure for all of us. Just how great an adventure, none of us could foresee.

Between Golondrinas and Del Norte is a distance of about

two hundred miles, a four- or five-hour journey today over fair roads. For us it meant eight days of struggle.

Two wagons and a buggy held us and all our possessions, including the furniture. Amelia and the baby rode in the buggy, which could not travel faster than the heavy wagons. In Mora Manuel Madrid, who was also going to school, and the Rev. J. J. Gilchrist, the minister in charge of the "Mora field," joined us, Mr. Gilchrist offering to drive one of the wagons as far as Taos.

I could take a long time describing that journey. On one hill just past Holman we had to hitch both teams to a single wagon in order to make the grade, and even then we thought we could never make it. We were thirsty, and couldn't find a spring. Manuel, in desperation, took a drink of vinegar and became too ill to drive. We did not find water until we reached Tres Ritos at midnight—where we made camp.

We spent the next day climbing U. S. Hill, doubling up teams again. On the north slope we made camp in a cold wind, pulling our caps well down over our ears. The fire was comforting and we took time to be stirred by the beauty about us—yellow pine, white fir, Douglas fir, and aspen just beginning to turn yellow. I remember that Amelia sang for us, her rich soprano floating out across the valley.

Petra sat beside Manuel, watching the fire. Now and then their hands touched—not quite accidentally, I thought. They had plenty of chance to get acquainted on this journey.

We dipped deep down into Arroyo Hondo; we forded the Colorado River; and later we forded the Río Grande, which proved not so difficult as we had feared. We watched lone Ute Peak to the left of us as we trekked over the Colorado plain, and the long chain of the Sangre de Cristos to the right.

Small incidents passed into family folklore. We bought hay at Capulín and encountered there a man who continually prodded his small son with the words. "*Andale, patos de perro!*" (Get on with you, dog-feet!) We tossed the phrase to one an-

other all along the rest of the journey—and more or less the rest of our lives.

“How far to Del Norte?” became a standing joke. Near Capulín some flour freighter told us “twenty-five miles.” Fifteen miles farther on, a mender of fences told us “fifty.” We laughed, because we were young, and the worst of the journey was over.

Our last camp was within twenty miles of Monte Vista, then called La Larieta, which had appeared unexpectedly out of the prairie. Here the women began to mourn, “There’s no bread left!”

“Women are so helpless!” Manuel said. “Now Gabino and I will make you some *buñuelos* that will melt in your mouth!”

We stirred up a batter and fried it in hot grease, Indian fashion, while the girls cried, “They won’t be fit to eat! We’ll die of them, and too bad, when we are so near the end of our journey!”

We laughed back, “If they are so tough, don’t eat so many!”

Years later Manuel could tease his wife Petra about her cooking by reminding her, “Remember those good *buñuelos* I made on the road to Del Norte?”

Del Norte proved to be only fifteen miles beyond the unexpected La Larieta. We rode into it on October 25, 1890, eight days after leaving Golondrinas.

Seminary Days

WE STAYED at Del Norte for three years, where we knew poverty and sorrow, adventure and joy. Sometimes I wonder how a woman like Amelia could have endured without complaint those months of struggle. She said it was "for the joy that was set before us," and she never let me waver from my purpose of becoming an ordained minister.

I remember, though, the sadness in her eyes when she decided to make over her wedding dress for little Ruth, and how long she held the scissors poised above the cloth before she made the first cut.

Our sorrow came when Ruth grew suddenly sick and nothing we could do made her any better. We lost her, and ever afterwards there was an empty ache in us that nothing could fill.

In May of the next year, 1892, our second child was born—another Ruth—and she filled her own place in our hearts.

It was in the fall of the same year that my sister Petra married Manuel Madrid.

There were eight of us students in the seminary class, and I think I had better write their names: Abelino Aguirre, Warren C. Buell, Luis O. Bernal, R. E. Hayes, Manuel Madrid, Gabino Rendón, M. D. J. Sánchez, and José J. Vigil. Our future work was to bring us even closer—in spirit, if not in geography.

The procedure in our seminary courses was simple. We students would enter the classroom armed with paper and pencil. The Rev. F. M. Gilchrist, adjusting his glasses, would resume his slow reading of the Lane Seminary lectures at the exact

point where he had left off the day before, and we painstakingly copied down his words. Thus we learned our theology.

In the summers we had good practical experience, often running into real danger. We preached in small settlements scattered over southern Colorado and northern New Mexico and we encountered the wildness of the West as well as religious opposition.

Forty miles to the north of Del Norte was one of my summer posts, a little settlement called Saguache (pronounced sawatchey). Up and down the road there I peddled Testaments and tracts and talked to any who would listen.

Four miles from Saguache was a cluster of houses known as Chicago, and into Chicago I went one day with my satchel of books. Stopping at a log house on the edge of the settlement I was met by a man who greeted me with sinister growls and a wild flinging about of arms.

"I have come upon a crazy man," I thought. "Perhaps he means murder."

While I stood rooted in terror, he rushed past me out of doors, scrambled up the corner of the house over the jutting ends of the logs, and made flail-like motions with his arms. Shortly afterwards a boy came running in from the fields and the man climbed down from his perch.

"He doesn't mean any harm, *señor*," the boy panted. "He just can't talk. He's deaf and dumb. He wants to buy a book—for me."

I sold him a book, yes, and I sold some to others. I happen to know that one forty-cent Bible changed the course of two whole lives.

It was in this neighborhood that I came to be known as "the man with a book," and when the dumb man wished to indicate me, he held in front of him his two hands, as if he were reading from them.

Once at a small village called Servilleta I preached to a good-sized group by lamplight. (We carried the lamps.) An impudent fellow made me nervous by glowering at me all the while. He

would not even take off his hat, and his bushy hair stuck out all around it.

"You come over to my house after the meeting," he shouted. "I'll argue with you there!"

I went, and we argued. He had a New Testament, which he didn't know much about, and when I asked him questions about its contents the sweat poured down his face in rivers. The young men who gathered around to watch the show were amused, but I saw nothing funny about the matter. When we finally closed the argument, one of the listeners took my arm and led me to his own house where he gave me a room and bed. Next day I heard that the fellow with whom I had argued had already shot and killed two men. The man who had invited me to his home wouldn't leave me alone a single moment.

Part of my work lay in the San Luis Valley to the south, near the New Mexico line, a region including the towns of San Pablo, Colorado, and Costilla, New Mexico.

One time I set out for Costilla traveling in a two-wheeled sulky behind the swift little pony I had named Nellie Bly. I had packed myself a lunch and had stowed my books, tracts, and sermons in a box in the bottom of the cart, and I set out in high spirits. I crossed the Río Grande over a bridge at Alamosa and felt good about it, thinking I had chosen a wise course. But I had forgotten about the Culebra River, which I would have to cross.

When I had last seen that river, it was a mere creek, but now the June sun had melted the snow in the mountains and it had become a raging torrent! When I reached it, I faced a black swollen stream, smelling of mud, and deafening me with its roar. It wasn't wide, but it was deep and swift.

"You can't make it," my common sense whispered. "You had better go back to Alamosa again, recrossing the bridge and coming down on the other side of the river to a place where you can ford it." But when I thought of all the extra hours of bouncing over rutty roads in the sulky and all the extra miles for Nellie Bly, I refused to listen to my better judgment.

"Since I am going on the Lord's errand," I told myself, "He will help me across."

I put my precious books up on the seat beside me and perched my feet on the dashboard. Firmly grasping the reins and the whip, I urged the pony into the water—against the pony's better judgment, too.

Never have I had, or even imagined, a wilder ride. The water surged over the wheels, over the body of the cart, over the seat. The pony snorted and plunged, and finally struck out swimming for the far bank. I was thoroughly wet, halfway to the thighs, and the water was bitterly cold. I knew that this was the end for me.

I thought of Amelia and prayed that the Lord would take care of her. I thought of my work, so soon cut off, before it was well begun. I prayed wildly, incoherently, feeling that at any moment I would float off the seat and be drowned in the mid-stream current. Then I realized that the horse's feet had struck bottom—that a wheel had grounded—then the two wheels. By a miracle, I was safe on the other side.

But would I live to cover the eighteen miles between the ford and Costilla? Late frost creeping into the valley bit through my wet clothing, which clung to me like sheets of ice. My teeth were past chattering, my jaw seemed frozen beyond power to move. When at last I entered the village, I was astonished to find myself still alive. I managed to find the house of a fellow student, Luis Bernal, and he thawed me out beside a hastily kindled fire.

For Amelia's sake, I resolved to be more cautious in the future.

My introduction to San Pablo, where I stayed to preach during the summer of 1892, was the beginning of my friendship with Mr. Antonio José Rodríguez, who had been preaching there and so knew the people. He had been assigned to Ignacio, a settlement of Ute Indians, and was getting ready to leave but was glad to stay long enough to introduce me to his friends. Through this man, who later became well known as "the apostle

to the Utes," I came in touch with an important bit of early Protestant history in San Luis Valley.

Antonio José Rodríguez was born of Penitente parents in Dixon, New Mexico, in 1846, the same year in which General Kearney took over the territory for the United States. At the age of nine he moved with his parents to Cenicero, Colorado, a small settlement about four miles east of Antonito. This place has disappeared from the map, but the influence of a few families who once lived there goes on and on.

At Cenicero the Rodríguez family came in contact with the families of Pablo and Pedro Ortega, who had gained a knowledge of the gospel from their brother-in-law, Mr. Pedro Sanchez. Mr. Sanchez had bought a small Spanish Bible (published in 1857) and had given for it a fat ox worth probably about twenty-five dollars. From the study of this book, he and his wife had become earnest Christians and without any other instruction were able to hand on their faith to their family, including Mrs. Sanchez' brothers, the Ortegas.

The first Presbyterian church in Colorado among Spanish-speaking people was organized in the home of Pablo Ortega. Two other churches grew from this one at Cenicero. Members of these churches went out to form others, until at least seven churches can trace their beginnings to that one Spanish Bible and the couple who read it.

Besides the Rodríguez family, the family of a patriarch named Desiderio Cisneros became Protestant through the influence of the Ortega brothers. Mr. Cisneros was a powerfully built man with piercing eyes under bushy eyebrows. In his presence I felt much as a lamb must feel in the presence of a buffalo. But his stormy looks and loud speech covered a surprising gentleness. He was determined to have a mission school for his children, and through his influence one was opened in Cenicero and moved to another place when he moved.

When I first visited this neighborhood I spent a night in Mr. Cisneros' home, and I never forgot it. Years later I was to meet him again under vastly different circumstances.

But to go back to Mr. Rodríguez. He had been brought up under the influence of these earliest Protestants of the valley, and had become one of the first Spanish American ministers—and one of the best.

To introduce me into San Pablo, he took me to see one of his friends, José Dolores Gonzales, an old acquaintance of his from Dixon. Don Dolores had been reading the Bible and was, perhaps, a prospect for church membership some day.

We arrived at the Gonzales house late in the afternoon, and I was left alone in one room while everyone else went into another part of the house. Time passed, and it seemed very long. Supper time came—but no signs of food. I was hungry, too.

At last I was called to supper, but there was chill in the atmosphere. Mr. Rodríguez tactfully tried to carry on a conversation, but without much success. It seems that it had taken hours of argument to persuade Mrs. Gonzales to give me any supper. She just didn't like me.

Little by little we got better acquainted. I took Amelia and little Ruth to visit and, although Amelia spoke very little Spanish, she and Mrs. Gonzales became very good friends, like sisters. The friendship of the Gonzales families—there were four of them—was to mean much to me in my later ministry.

If I had the artistic talent of my daughter Rebecca, I should like to paint a scene often repeated in those days. It took place at Cañon de La Costilla (now Amalia) at the home of a man named Juan José Santistevan, an old-fashioned adobe house.

The fire from a corner *fogón* (fireplace) spilled flickering light over the listening congregation—men and boys on chairs and benches, women and girls on the floor on sheepskins, goatskins, and blankets. On a half-wall dividing the long room stood a row of candles, and scattered about the room to light up the pages of *El Nuevo Hymnario* (*The New Hymnal*, really new in those days) were a half dozen more candles set up in empty beer bottles. That picture still comes to my mind when I read the beloved words, "I am the light of the world."

San Luis Valley

THE COURSES in Del Norte were finished in June, 1893. Four of us completed the studies. A number of distinguished speakers appeared on our commencement program. Miss Speakman came all the way from her mission school in Payson, Utah, to see two of her old pupils graduate—Manuel Madrid and Gabino Rendón.

Although we were not to be ordained for a long time, we were given mission charges immediately. Manuel was sent to Santa Fé and I to the San Luis Valley, with which I was already so familiar. My field lay between San Pablo and San Luis, Colorado, and Costilla and other places in New Mexico.

I wish I could help you see that country. It lies in the southeastern corner of the San Luis Valley, straight west of Trinidad, Colorado, and straight north from Taos, New Mexico. Though the valley is fairly level, covered with fertile fields, we have a saying about it: "There is only one direction in which you cannot see mountains—that is directly upward." Beyond the valley to the north the hills of the Culebra Range roll up toward snow-streaked Mt. Blanca, one of the sacred mountains of the Navaho Indians; to the east is the Culebra Range of the Sangre de Cristos; and far to the west lie the white peaks of the San Juan Range. In the valley the creeks are lined with cottonwoods and the unplowed fields are sprinkled with sage and thistles. Here and there on the foothills stand twisted cedar trees. In the days when I traveled the roads, riding or driving Nellie Bly, antelope ran through the sage.

If you visit Costilla today, you can guess how it used to look. The adobe houses are strung out in continuous rows, flat-roofed, thick-walled, with low-silled doorways and pails up-ended over the chimney tops. In the windows are flowering plants in tin cans. In the old days the flowers grew in clay pots—yellow clay, from which cooking utensils were also made. The houses were surrounded by small farms and gardens.

The home of Juan de Jesús Bernal, father of my classmate, Luis Bernal, was built in the shape of an “L.” Luis lived in one end of it while he was the village preacher. It was in this house that I had been thawed out after my adventure in the Culebra River.

The fact that the Bernal family and a few others were Protestants was largely due to the work of Mr. M. D. J. Sanchez, my seminary classmate, but a man considerably older and more experienced than I. His grandfather, Juan de Jesús Gómez, had had the good fortune to see one of the early Spanish Bibles printed by the American Bible Society. He began to long for it and offered to buy it. The price was high—the loan of a team of oxen for the trip to Santa Fe, ten dollars in cash, and an ox besides. Altogether it must have cost him between \$75.00 and \$100.00. He read and re-read this book and compared its teachings with the teachings and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. He declared the latter false, according to the Bible, and formally withdrew from the Roman Church, long before he knew there were such people as “Protestants” in the country. The members of his family were ready for church membership when the first Presbyterian missionaries arrived.

His grandson, then, was my supervisor during the four years of my first “charge” in that valley.

Since we already had friends in Costilla, we lived there at first, traveling to other preaching points. Whenever we were in San Pablo, our headquarters was at the home of José Dolores Gonzales, whose wife had been so cool to me on my first visit. The whole family became “believers” and when the church in

San Pablo was organized they were among the charter members.

For a short time my family lived in San Pablo, in order to be near a doctor. My second daughter, Rebecca, was born there, in the Gonzales house.

Some time later we moved to San Luis, the oldest town in Colorado. There my third daughter, Myrtle, was born.

A few incidents stand out in my memory of that pastorate. One was my performance of a "miracle." It happened during the Christmas holidays, when I was making calls in the home of another Gonzales family with a young seminary student who had come to assist me.

We stood in the doorway of Jesús Gonzales' bedroom, hesitating to go in because Mr. Gonzales was in evident distress. Dressed in a coat, he was writhing until the bedclothes were a tangled mass, and his face was twisted like his body. "He has a dislocated shoulder," his wife and daughter explained, "We can't even take his coat off. Will he die, do you think?"

I offered to pray for him, for I didn't know what else to do. After the prayer, I said, "Now let me see if I can help take off his coat." I took hold of the sleeve as gently as I could, pulling it little by little, while he groaned and cried out. I was afraid I was killing him. Suddenly something happened. The bone of his upper arm snapped back into place. And just as suddenly the man's pain was gone.

"I am healed!" he shouted. "You have healed me!"

Then we offered another prayer, this time of thanksgiving. I call this a "miracle" because I had no idea of anatomy, and I felt sure it was more than sheer accident.

One afternoon a man on horseback rode around the crooked streets of San Pablo, drumming up a Sunday night dance. He asked a Presbyterian fiddler to play for it, and the man refused, asking me to stand back of his refusal. I met the dance promoter and berated him roundly.

"You are tempting the people to do wrong," I told him. "You not only hold these dances, not much more than drunken riots, but you break the Sabbath with them. The fiddler did right to

say no to you." The man muttered something under his breath and wheeled his horse sharply. I paid no attention to the incident, for I felt sure his threats didn't amount to anything.

The Sunday night services were held in Mr. Buell's schoolhouse. The pulpit stood in one room and most of the audience sat in another, out of the speaker's sight. Amelia and little Ruth, who had come with me, were in the room where I spoke. I felt tension in the air from the beginning but I was determined to go right ahead.

Turning to the second chapter of Acts, I read, as loud as I could, "For these men are not drunken, as ye suppose."

"That's an insult," a man at my elbow said thickly. "You think I'm drunk, eh? I'll show you. I'll show everybody. I'll—"

I stopped my reading and tried to look into his shifty eyes. Taking my courage in hand I said firmly, "You are going straight out of this room!"

Then I was astounded at what I had said, for the fellow was twice my size and thoroughly drunk.

"You come put me out!" he cried. But when I moved toward him, he went backward, toward the door between the rooms. He finally went outside, but the disturbance was not over. Someone else talked and muttered aloud as I proceeded with the sermon. I thought I could hardly finish the benediction.

"Who was trying to drown me out in there?" I asked Mr. Buell after the service.

"It was the man who was promoting the dance," he said. "Not the drunken fellow you put out."

Amelia, Ruth, and I started with the Gonzales family across the fields to the Gonzales house, where we were to spend the night. A number of other families joined us, for they liked to sing hymns with Amelia after the services.

A white November moon poured cool light over the peaceful fields, and all seemed quiet indeed. Yet for some reason we were tense and silent.

Suddenly a revolver shot cracked the stillness. We stopped

stock still for a moment, then started running across the fields to the house.

It was hard to sing that night, and the party soon broke up. We said goodnight almost in whispers.

I had lain down with little Ruth beside me, fondling her and whispering pet phrases in Spanish when Amelia whispered, "Look, Gabino! Somebody is there, by the window!"

"Nonsense," I said. "It's probably some burros." Nevertheless I tiptoed to the window and looked out. I was just in time to catch sight of a man's hat in outline—then a whole man, running. I hastily drew on a few clothes and called Mr. Gonzales. Together we examined the premises. Under the window lay a six-shooter!

As we turned the gun over in our hands, finding all the cartridges exploded, a man's figure shot out from behind a woodpile. We both sprang on top of him, but he, using a bottle for a cudgel, managed to escape. But we knew who he was—the dance promoter.

Against this man I lodged a complaint at court. He disappeared for a time, across the New Mexico border. Next time I saw him he was armed. For awhile we both went armed.

Next Washington's birthday the two of us, fully armed, met face to face. I was in the sulky behind Nellie Bly, he was on horseback. He lifted a hand to stop me, and I stopped, wondering if we would shoot it out then and there.

To my surprise he said, with a twisted smile, "I haven't come to shoot you. I want to ask your pardon for my bad manners."

I leaned from the cart to grasp his hand, and a great weight seemed to slip from my shoulders and my heart. "My pardon," I told him, "is yours already." And he promised to come to my meetings! He kept his promise, and he and his father became regular attendants at our services.

I tell this story only to show what all of us young preachers encountered in those early days. I had no more than my share of such adventure.

Ordination

IN JANUARY, 1897, I returned to school at Del Norte. The College of the Southwest was offering new courses that would enable me to finish my college and seminary work. Amelia, of course, was eager to have me go.

"When you are an honest-to-goodness ordained minister," she would say, "we'll be done with all this pinching and contriving and we'll live like *people*." Well, she had been patient with my poor providing, and I hoped I could do better some day and even make her proud of me. Her faith in my kept me moving toward the goal.

On week ends I revisited my old haunts around Saguache and Chicago, and made them preaching points again, for I must preach and do pastoral work as well as study. I met a number of old friends.

The woman who had bought a forty-cent Bible from me presented her husband as a new convert. "After you left," she told me, "we moved out on a lonely ranch. We were so bored in the long Sunday afternoons that I began to entertain my husband by reading the Bible aloud. Now he wants to join your church!" It was not long before he became an elder.

The deaf and dumb man who had once terrified me by his gyrations became useful as a guide, introducing me into houses where, without him, I would have had no means of access. He still referred to me by holding his two hands book-wise in front of him. I was to all the vicinity the "man with a book."

Somehow we managed to get a new, bright yellow buggy,

large enough to hold a small folding organ, and Amelia could ride with me to my preaching points. She led the singing in a voice that would have graced a large trained choir while the little organ wheezed out the tunes.

After a preaching service we had informal lunches. At most places the congregation furnished the food, but at Chicago we ourselves and one elder had to be responsible for it. I remember how we emptied our own pantry to furnish that food, wondering if it were fair to our own daughters to take it.

"The Lord will provide," I said, but I knew full well that Amelia was becoming weary of that well-worn phrase.

The bread we passed disappeared all too quickly. We wanted to cry out, "Save at least some crumbs for the little girls tomorrow!" But no crumbs were left. The time had come, I admitted, when we should have to go hungry.

Amelia played the closing hymn with something like desperation. Perhaps something in her eye caught the attention of the wizened white-haired stranger on the fringe of the group. At any rate, while we were packing up the organ after the service, he pressed something into her hand, saying, "It is for you, *señora*. I like the songs. Understand?" And disappeared.

"I don't deserve it," Amelia said wildly. "I didn't believe it would happen!"

Another man took the occasion to pay an overdue bill for books, and so our pantry could be stocked again.

It was during those trips between Del Norte and Saguache that I committed to memory all the Sermon on the Mount. I would take off my heavy gloves, open my New Testament, and repeat part of a passage until my hands got cold. Then I would go on repeating the words. At such times I would keep the reins around my neck. The horses knew enough to keep the road.

The winter of '98-'99 was the coldest on record, but because I was young and full of zeal, I wouldn't let the storms hold me back. Time after time my sturdy team was the first to break the road through new snow drifts. I still had Nellie Bly, and for a

while, Fanny. By and by I traded Fanny for Kitty, an even faster horse.

I remember one blizzard in particular. Twelve or fifteen miles from my destination I drove unwittingly into a drift where the buggy wheels stuck fast. The wind had sifted snow smoothly over the hollows, making the road deceitfully level. While the horses tugged and struggled, I dug frantically around the wheels with my hands, until at last we were able to move again.

We had no more than started when the storm struck, seemingly from every direction at once. My hands seemed frozen to the reins, and lightning streaks of red and black zigzagged across my eyes. I was dimly conscious of a pack of coyotes, howling along with the wind. My knees were stiff under their blanket of snow.

I lost all sense of time and distance and just gave the horses their heads. Somehow they kept going.

When at last we pulled into the yard of a friend's house at my destination, my friend cried out in astonishment, "*But hermano* (brother) we did not expect you on a night like this!" Certainly, I did not expect to be alive at the end of the journey.

That was the winter I met Nestor Pacheco, a leader of the Penitente order who owned a goat ranch near Saguache. He was secretly reading the Bible with his family, so I heard, and I decided to call on him.

He was away when I first reached the ranch, but his wife and mother received me courteously and asked me to dinner. I accepted their invitation and spent most of the afternoon singing hymns with them. Where they had learned those hymns was a mystery I never solved.

I received permission, when Nestor returned, to hold services in his house. My text was chosen with greatest care and prayer—Acts 17:11. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The result of that sermon was the conversion of the strong Penitente and all his household. Three other families joined

the church at the same time, and the Pacheco home became a regular preaching point.

The month after the Pacheco families were converted (February 1899) I received notice that the appropriation for the work at Saguache had been exhausted. I could not give it up, however, for it was not finished. A firm at Del Norte supplied me with food for my family and feed for my horses. I gave a note for the debt—a note I was a long time in paying.

As I look back over those months, I think of a great mixture of activity; and I see myself studying Greek New Testament and zoology, teaching Spanish, chopping piñon wood, shoeing horses, doing odd bits of carpentry, preaching, taking people—including my own girls—to the doctor for vaccinations, holding prayer meetings, making calls, and writing letters. I kept up a correspondence with Miss Speakman, who was still teaching in a mission school at Payson, Utah; Mr. Fraser, who was now Dr. Fraser and president of New Windsor College at New Windsor, Maryland; and Mr. Whitlock, who was in charge of work in Taos, Tierra Amarilla, and Lumberton, New Mexico.

The Rev. J. E. Weir came to be president of the college while I was there, and he was my good friend and adviser.

Amelia and I read aloud to each other in the evening, and in the papers we read of the war in Manila. It seemed very far from Del Norte, Colorado!

The spring meeting of Pueblo Presbytery, in which ministers and elders from all over southern Colorado would gather at Monte Vista, would be a crucial one for me. I would have to present three sermons, and would have to be thoroughly examined on theology before I could be ordained to the ministry. One other candidate, a young man named Refugio Jaramillo, was also being examined, but only for a license to preach, not for ordination.

I was so much worried that I suffered from frequent sick headaches, by which I have been bothered, more or less, all my life. The speech that troubled me most was one to be delivered at a banquet in Del Norte which Dr. Weir had arranged in

order to introduce his seminary students to guests from the presbytery. Some of them were inclined to believe that the Spanish-speaking students were of rather inferior mental ability and had doubts as to whether we would ever make competent ministers. Dr. Weir was giving us this chance to prove ourselves. No wonder I was concerned.

"When I stand up in front of those men," I told Amelia, "I will lose every word I ever knew."

"You will *find* words, Gabino," she insisted.

"But," I protested, "it's not like talking in a house at Chicago, or arguing with a man in an open field. I don't have to convert these men."

"No?" My wife raised her eyebrow. "You have to convert them into thinking that a native son of New Mexico is worthy of their own high calling."

"I see," I said. I saw all too well and I could not think of anything at all to say at that banquet.

The last night I had to prepare I could not sleep. About midnight I heard a noise in the yard, the all too-familiar sound of stray horses. I climbed out of bed, standing for a few moments beside the door, drinking in the starlight. The smell of spring was in the air. Tree branches silhouetted against the night sky showed swollen buds, and a frog was croaking down by the ditch bank. Confidence came into me out of the stillness, and I said to myself, "That speech will come to me." I drove the horses out with a sort of exhilaration.

Sure enough, before morning a story occurred to me, so appropriate that I wondered where I had encountered it. I never did recall its source—it just came to me.

The English-speaking brethren seemed friendly enough, and I was not embarrassed, after all, to tell them the story that had come to me in the middle of the night:

A certain minister was in the midst of building a new church. The families in his congregation gave toward it as they were able—some less, some more. One family gave \$500 in memory of a

small son who had died. The minister made a speech of gratitude for this large gift.

"We cannot all give so much," he said, "but we can all give *something*—a few dollars, perhaps, or a few cents. Whatever it is, let us offer it with willing hearts—yes, be it even as small as one nail!"

In his audience was a poor child who had not so much as a single nail to offer, but the idea stuck in his mind. Up and down the streets and alleys he went, hunting and hunting until he found one. It was old and bent and a little rusty, but still it was something. He brought it to the minister, saying, "Look! You said we should give something, even if it is only a nail. Here is my gift for the new church!"

The minister took this gift graciously and made it useful. When the chapel was finished a picture was hung in the vestibule. It was the picture of the boy in whose memory the large gift had been given. But what do you think held up that picture? Yes, it was a nail—no longer crooked and rusty, but straightened and polished and gilded—the gift of the poor child who had brought the best he could find.

We seminary students are like that nail, my friends. We may have been crooked and dull to begin with, but here we are being straightened and polished for use in the kingdom. Chapel walls must be built by others who have more material wealth, but we can offer service in those chapels—the best that lies within us, for the sake of Him who has loved us and given his life for us.

When I sat down I was conscious that I had made a good impression, and that Dr. Weir was proud of me. I struggled against a sort of pride in myself, knowing that Amelia was gratified too. She could not go with me to Monte Vista where I was to be ordained.

"By the grace of God and the kindness of Presbytery," as my diary says, I passed the examinations, my sermons and exegeses were accepted, and in the evening of April 13, 1899, I was duly ordained by the laying on of hands. I rose from my knees that night, my eyes misty with gratitude, the Reverend Gabino Rendón.

Salt Creek—Salt Tears

WE STARTED for our first pastorate full of high hopes. The "Pueblo field," to which I had been assigned by the Home Missions Committee of Pueblo Presbytery, included work in two sizeable towns, Pueblo and Walsenburg, Colorado, and a preaching point in between known as Huerfano Cañon. Pueblo and Walsenburg were mining and industrial centers. It seemed to us that we were at last going to live "like people."

Having packed our belongings—all that were not sold—to ship by freight, we set out by buggy to drive from Del Norte to our new home. We had absolutely no money, except what I managed to borrow, and fifty dollars given us by the Del Norte church through the kindness of Dr. Weir and the pastor, Dr. McFadson. My salary, however, would soon be coming—so we thought—from the Board of Home Missions. We did not know that my appointment had never been reported to the Board by the chairman of the Home Missions Committee who lived in Colorado Springs.

Upon reaching Pueblo, we stayed for the first night with the Rev. David Montfort, pastor of an English-speaking Presbyterian church. Without his friendship we could not well have lived through the following months.

For, alas, our new location turned out to be in one of the worst slums I have ever seen. The church—if you could call it a church—was in a dismal depression known as Salado, or Salt Creek, and our house—after all our high hopes—was only a

hovel. How could I, I asked myself day after day, have brought Amelia, my proud, capable, artistic Amelia, to this?

It was six miles to the post office, but I tramped it every day, first hoping for notice of the arrival of our freight, then hoping against hope for a check from the Board. The freight did arrive, and I brought it home in a borrowed wagon, but the check simply did not appear.

I had not money enough to feed the horses, not enough to pay our grocery bills, not enough to buy the girls' shoes. We began to be sick. Amelia was ill from undernourishment and the oppressive air of Salt Creek bottom. The girls one after the other had scarlet fever. I myself had violent headaches and bronchitis. We seldom asked help from a doctor because we could not pay him. I tried to trade my watch for medicine, but even in that I failed. The last straw came when a man tried to take Nellie Bly away from us. He said she carried his brand!

One day a letter came—not the one I so earnestly hoped and prayed for, but one postmarked "Walsenburg." Why, inquired the writer, had I not shown up to hold services there? I wrote back that I had no means of coming. The Walsenburg congregation sent me five dollars.

Mr. Montfort lent me a little money. The rancher who fed my horses donated a sewing machine for Amelia, although there was precious little to sew on it.

I was compelled to sell one of my horses in order to buy food. I am afraid I even began to doubt the Lord. Here I had promised to serve him with my whole life—and how he let us suffer all this misery. Then I thought, "No, it is not the Lord. It is my forgetful brethren from the presbytery committee."

One day during the worst of our despair, Luis Bernal came to see me. He was discouraged, too, with the preaching business, so far as making a living was concerned, and he had in mind a proposition that greatly tempted me.

"You can't live like this," he said. "You are killing your wife and children. The Church has let you down—you owe it noth-

ing. (*Nada, nada.*) I've been lucky in a way. At least I've saved a thousand dollars."

A thousand dollars! To me that day, it sounded like a million. I would have been happy with ten—and a *thousand* . . . !

"Here's my proposition," Luis went on. "I want to invest my money and make it bring me some profit. The Italian who owns the store on Salt Creek wants to sell, I happen to know. Let me buy him out and hire you to run it for me. It will help us both. You are an experienced storekeeper. Remember Las Vegas? Well, what do you say? Better, *no*, than letting your wife and children starve?"

I told him I would think it over. I had written Dr. Thomas C. Kirkwood, the Colorado synodical missionary, and I hoped he would do something about my salary. Still . . .

Never had I had such a tussle with my conscience. Never have I been so close to giving up the whole idea of the ministry. My need was so great, my disappointment so keen, my wife and children in such straits. Oh, the devil was hard at me in those days! What to do—what to do?

The church structure did not help me any. It had a corrugated iron roof which made it like a stove in summer. My audience could not keep awake.

"I can't even preach," I wailed to Amelia.

"It's the building, not you, Gabino," she insisted. "We'll have to make it over." But there was no way to make it over.

I was homesick for seminary days, for the years in San Luis, for friends in New Mexico. I could hardly hold up my head.

My diary says I "made a dancing jack for Rebbie," and "a cardboard bear for Myrtle." I tried to amuse them by telling them stories of my days as an acrobat in Las Vegas, and I acted out the stunt of Jesús Alvarez in the bull pen. And all the time I was thinking that the next day I would have to keep store again.

Yet, hard pressed as we were, Amelia did not want me to give up. She had not married a grocer, she said. She had mar-

ried a minister. She would rather be miserable than have me forsake the ministry.

As for me, my ordination vows were fresh in my memory. I remembered, too, my promise in the church in old Las Vegas, "Give me, Lord, twenty-one more years in which to serve thee." The twenty-one years were just begun. Then I thought, "'No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.' The Lord *will* provide."

Somehow I had to be true to my calling, for I felt a hand on my shoulder that would not let me go. I told Luis I wouldn't give up—yet—and he called me a fool. But he put his arm around me just the same and said I was the kind of fool he could take off his hat to.

In the middle of July (we had arrived in April) *my first check came* for fifty dollars. I should like to write this in red letters!

I paid my note at the bank (I had borrowed twenty dollars), bought shoes for the girls, and paid my grocery bill.

Within a few days we moved into a room at the back of the church, and I began to build with my own hands a two-room addition. When that was done, Amelia began to take in boarders. The crisis was over.

I had an encouraging letter from Miss Speakman and others from Mr. Whitlock and Vicente Romero of Taos. I would not have been able to read those letters if I had given up my work.

Mr. Montfort helped me solicit funds for our church building. We shingled the roof and put in a ceiling and plastered the walls. I was director of the work and chief laborer. The task was well worth while, for now my audiences stayed awake long enough to hear what I had to say!

In the fall of 1900 we were assigned to a new field, Santa Fé, New Mexico. We left Pueblo with no regrets and in a flutter of excitement over the journey. For the first time, we would not travel by buggy. The boarders had paid so well that we could afford a trip by train!

The Santa Fé Field

IT WAS GOOD to get back into New Mexico, which will always seem like home to me. One of my duties was preaching to the girls at the mission boarding school, "The Industrial School for Mexican Girls" of which Miss Matilda Allison was principal. At the school I always had an audience! But my "field" proved to be far larger than the City of Santa Fé. By action of the Santa Fé Presbytery (April, 1901), it included Chimayo and Córdova, on the road to the north, beyond Española. Later it included many other places besides. Under the supervision of the Rev. Robert M. Craig, synodical missionary of New Mexico, and with the help of Mr. Juan Quintana, the "local evangelist" stationed at Chimayo, I undertook my new work with enthusiasm.

As soon as I arrived on the field (November, 1900) I set out to visit the places that would soon be in my charge. On the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad I rode to Española, where Mr. Juan Quintana sent friends to meet me and take me up the narrow, sandy, rutty road that led to Chimayo.

Chimayo is well known today for its beautiful handwoven rugs and blankets, but at the turn of the century the industry, though old, had not attracted this wide attention. The village was best known for its well of "sacred earth," which was reputed to have great healing power. Pilgrims came long distances for samples of it, and even sprinkled grains of its dust on their heads. The cave (for the "well" is just a hole in the ground) was supposed to fill up miraculously, and a shrine was built up

around it. In the shrine was—and is—a famous crucifix of *Nuestro Señor de Esquipula*. In another church is an image of the *Santo Niño* (Holy Child), who is said to wear out several pairs of shoes on his errands of mercy. Pilgrims leave at his shrine new small shoes, or money to buy them, and so hasten the answer to their prayers.

At the church in the village of Córdova, near Chimayo, was a lay preacher, Mr. José Emiterio Cruz. It is a temptation to tell you more about this Mr. Cruz. He had been converted at Agua Negra (Holman) across the mountain, while he was making furniture for the school begun by Rafael Gallegos, one which does not appear in any Board records. He had a broken nose because he refused to take off his hat when, in Las Vegas, he had watched the Corpus Christi procession. At a much earlier date, while he was living at Córdova, a priest challenged him to a debate on the subject, "Resolved: that the Catholic Church practices idolatry." People looked forward to a big time, but when the hour came, the priest was too drunk to take his part and Mr. Cruz had the meeting all to himself. I like to call him "Mr. Valiant-for-Truth."

Mr. Juan Quintana, who followed him in the Chimayo region, had something of the same quality in him. He, with his capable wife, had started a school in Chimayo. Just before I arrived, two teachers had come from the East to teach in it—the Misses Prudence and Jennie Clark—and a building was in process of construction. Mr. Quintana had contracted for the materials, bringing lumber, paint, and nails from Española by wagon. Local men made and laid the adobe bricks by hand. Much of the actual cash (\$750) was given by Miss Alice Hyson, a mission teacher at Ranchos de Taos, in memory of her father, so that the building was named in his honor, "John Hyson Memorial."

I used to visit Chimayo now and then to oversee the school and the church, riding with Mr. Quintana over the trails he had so well worn. And in 1903 I helped with the organization of the church there.

Although I am tempted to tell more history here, I will only write of a few incidents. Manuel Madrid, my brother-in-law, who was in charge of the Mora field across the mountain from Chimayo, came over to help Mr. Quintana and me with evangelistic services in January, 1903. Interest was great, but we had few converts. It was a hard thing in those days, as we well knew, for anyone to leave the Roman Church, and only one native of Chimayo was willing to risk it. His name is Victoriano Cruz. Against Manuel's counsel, but with my full consent, we organized a church January 7, 1903, with only six members: Misses Prudence and Jennie Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Quintana and their son Elias, and Mr. Cruz. In time our faith was justified.

A church at Las Truchas, nine miles up a steep mountain, was organized just a week afterwards. It had fifteen members.

Hoping the small nucleus at Chimayo would grow, we held evangelistic services there every year. One year a Roman Catholic bishop visited Chimayo just before our meetings began. He bitterly warned the people against us. We were heretics, he said, and if the people listened to us or sent their children to the mission school, they would surely be doomed to hell-fire. Nevertheless, a crowd came to our first service to hear what we had to say.

Unfortunately, our preacher, a visiting English-speaking minister, took the same note. All who listened to the bishop, he said, were doomed to hell-fire. I had to translate his speech—and oh, how I hated to do it! The people began to leave the meeting. All we had tried to do seemed lost.

At the end of the service, the mission teachers called me into conference. Miss Prudence was almost crying. "You must do something," she insisted. "Apologize, if you must. Smooth it over somehow."

"I doubt if we can," I answered, "but we'll pray about it." We prayed, and as we did so it came to me what I must do.

The next night I decided to speak myself. I faced a larger crowd than usual, but their eyes didn't show the usual friendly attitude. While I cannot say they were actually hostile, their

manner was cold as I greeted them. What should I say to those people?

Praying for help, I began: "My friends, you are confused, and I do not wonder. You have been twice condemned—once for listening to us, once for listening to the bishop. What are you to think?

"Listen, my friends. There is One who does not condemn you. He loves you. He gave his life for you. He stands in love, calling to every one of you, 'Come unto me, all you who are weary and heavy laden . . . Come unto me!' It is the Lord Jesus Christ."

Crowds poured back into the services. Two young men, later elders and always valuable members, joined the church, and some years later their families followed them.

On the day when the schoolhouse at Chimayo was dedicated, an American flag, ordered by Mr. Quintana, was presented. Don Luciano Ortega, an old man from Las Truchas, brought a pole for it in his wagon, a very long pole, peeled off clean and white. It was set in the ground, and Old Glory was raised. That made Don Luciano's heart feel good. He, like my father, had been a soldier in the Union army.

After the ceremony, Mr. Ortega said he wanted a private talk with Mr. Craig, the synodical missionary, who had come to take part in the proceedings, and asked me to interpret for him.

"I am an old man," he said, "and I fought for that flag, for the American government, in the Civil War. All we ask of this country is a school for our children. The people of Chimayo have one now. In Las Truchas are more children than in Chimayo. Can you not get a school for the children of Las Truchas?"

Mr. Craig was touched by the old man's plea, and promised to ask for a school when next he went East. When he told this story at the First Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey, an eager company of volunteers offered a salary for a mission teacher. In October, 1902, Miss Rebecca Meeker made her way up to Truchas and opened the mission school.

I was much interested in the little village of Chamisal, between Truchas and Peñasco. One Good Friday night I preached in the village and spent the night there. Next morning I stood watching the crowds pour out of the Catholic church, carrying little bottles of *agua bendita*, water blessed by the priest, to sprinkle around their fireplaces at prayer time. It was a rather pretty custom, perhaps, but I felt pity for those who trusted so blindly in the power of the priest's blessing.

Suddenly a strange thing happened. The crowd streaming past me seemed to turn around and come directly toward me. The eyes of the women were lifted from the dark shawls that covered their heads and they shone straight into mine with pathetic pleading, while their hands, empty of the little bottles, stretched out toward me. "Lead us to the living water!" they cried. "Give us that water, whereof if one shall drink he shall never thirst again!"

"Why," I said to myself, "these are *my* people, *my* flock, *my* church!"

I passed my hand over my eyes and looked again. I was mistaken. The procession was still moving away from me, with the bottles still held close under the black fringed shawls. Like Peter on the housetop, I had had a vision!

Some power, possibly the remembrance of that vision, drew me to hold revival services every year at Chamisal. The first year, there were two converts; the next year, thirteen; the next, thirty-one. Some of these were indeed the same persons I had watched from the front of the Catholic church on that memorable Saturday morning.

Later, the Board opened a mission school at Chamisal, and we changed the center of our activities from Peñasco and Santa Barbara to Chamisal.

I want to make it clear that those who labored day by day, week in and week out, in places like Chimayo, Truchas, and Chamisal, are the ones to whom real credit is due for the growth of this work—to them and to God's spirit. Some of us planted, some of us watered, but God gave the increase.

Prayer Meeting on the Prairie

IT MUST BE CONFESSED that I was beginning to feel the same sort of pride that I had once felt after a creditable performance on the horizontal bars when I was a boy. I had a knack with words—simple words that somehow moved people to laughter and tears. We had a good house—at last—and a raise in salary without my asking for it. In the Synod of New Mexico, including the territories of New Mexico and Arizona, I was beginning to take my place among the men who moved the wheels of the church.

Let me go back a year or two in my story. In 1901 at the meeting of the synod in Flagstaff, Arizona, I sat on the platform with Dr. Cook, the “apostle to the Pimas.” We shook hands. We were friends. I felt honored and happy to be sitting beside such a man.

I had my own report to bring concerning the work in Spanish-speaking New Mexico. “It is said,” I remarked, “that the Scotch are brought up on oatmeal and the Shorter Catechism. Well, the Spanish-speaking people are brought up on *chili* and beans and the Shorter Catechism!

“The German is fond of his sauerkraut,
The potato is loved by the ‘Mick’;
But we New Mexicans have long since found out
That to *chili* and beans we should stick!”

Of course there was a serious side to my report, but the little rhyme made a hit, and I suddenly found myself the center of attention.

Shortly after that meeting I was in Albuquerque. In the ministerial training school opened by Dr. H. C. Thompson in connection with Menaul School I found a number of the boys thoroughly discouraged. "We were about ready to quit," one of them later confessed. I gave them a talk about the Church, as I had caught a glimpse of it, and I could see that they were blinking back tears. They decided to stay with their course. Some of them are now among our best ministers.

Well, such experiences tend to give a man a feeling of power. But the Lord has his own ways of keeping us humble.

At a conference of ministers in Albuquerque, I was happy to see again Don Ynez Perea and Mr. Whitlock, my old friends of John Annin's time. At that meeting, for some reason, we were short of hot water. Someone had to rise early, heat it, and bring it to the others for washing and shaving. We young ministers were not the ones who thought of it. Oh, no. It was Don Ynez and Mr. Whitlock! They got up early and brought it to the rest of us.

Now who was I that men like these should bring warm water to me? Somehow I was reminded of One who washed his disciples' feet. I was ashamed. I remembered my father's telling me that Don Ynez and Rafael Gallegos used to haul water for Mr. Annin. He thought it degraded them. But my father had never read nor heard, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

That incident, however, had not quite the same lasting effect on me as something that occurred to me later in the course of a missionary journey. I shall have to explain what led up to that.

In 1903 the Synod of New Mexico met in Santa Fé. Dr. Lapsley McAfee, the retiring moderator, had just delivered an eloquent sermon, to which I had listened with rapt attention. "He is a great man," I thought. "It takes a great man to be moderator of the synod.

I was startled out of my absorption by hearing my own name pronounced from the floor. Someone was proposing me for

the next moderator. But that was not possible! No Spanish American had ever held that post. The English-speaking brethren would hardly think it fitting. I felt myself utterly unworthy, yet curiously thrilled. A slow flush of embarrassment covered me. Before I could gather my wits together to protest, I found myself unanimously elected!

A lightning recollection returned to me of the day when Miss Speakman had sent me to the presbytery meeting to learn Robert's Rules of Order. How much had begun for me that day!

Amelia would be proud of me, I thought, but not surprised. She would insist—and did—that she had known all the time something of the sort would happen.

Another honor came to me at that meeting, the appointment as editor of the Spanish-English news sheet, *La Aurora*. For some time I had edited a column called "La Juventud y el Hogar" (Youth and Home), featuring letters from children and young people. Now I would have the whole responsibility for the Spanish portion of the paper. It would be a most time-consuming task, but, at the same time, the post carried with it a certain amount of distinction.

My field had grown larger and larger and took much of my time to visit these churches in rotation, and encourage the local evangelists in each place. Yet now, as moderator of the synod, I needed to go farther afield, to become acquainted with the work in the whole territory.

I had heard that a number of Protestants from the San Luis Valley, both Methodists and Presbyterians, had moved into the plains of Union County to the east of us and were without churches, pastors, or religious help of any kind. It seemed to me worth while to find them if I could and give them as much encouragement as possible.

Early in August I set out. I was not to travel entirely alone. From Mora, Manuel Madrid and Manuel Sandoval, one of his assistants in the El Rito (Chacón) area, set out to meet me at Springer. In Mr. Sandoval's wagon the three of us drove out into the plains to the northeast.

This was the country, I told myself, where my father used to hunt for buffalo. Now I was hunting for something far more worth while.

We continued in a northeasterly direction across Ute Creek to Pasamonte. There, finding two of Mr. Sandoval's brothers and groups of Methodists, we held services. The people seemed most grateful. From there we turned southeast, traveling through a terrific thunderstorm, seeking a place long known to traders and Indians as *La Ceja de los Comancheros*, brow of the Comanche traders.

At La Ceja lived a man I had known in the San Luis Valley, the old patriarch rancher and cattleman, Desiderio Cisneros. We found him, eventually, looking as fierce as ever and being as kind. He said he frightened his cowboys into keeping the Sabbath, but the cowboys did not appear particularly terrified. He collected his neighbors for several services in a row, professing to be delighted to see us and wanting to "make this visit last a long time."

The town of Clayton, to the northeast again, was our next destination, and since there was no well marked road from La Ceja, Mr. Cisneros offered to guide us for several miles. He rode ahead of our wagon, his strong horse trampling a path through the tall prairie grass. I had never seen such an ocean of grass. It rippled and billowed in the light wind on and on all the way to the horizon.

Suddenly our guide pulled his horse to a stop, whirled around, and held up his hand. "From here I can show you the way to Clayton," he said. "This is as far as I need to go with you."

Then he suggested that we have prayer together before he left us, and we agreed.

While we climbed out of our wagon, he dismounted from his horse, and we knelt there on the grass, our knees pressing hollows in the waves of it. The grass stretched on all sides, all the way to the horizon, filling us who were used to the mountains with a sense of infinite space. We were such specks in that

immensity; I felt as I have sometimes felt under a canopy of stars in the seemingly infinite heavens.

We prayed aloud in turn and, as we offered our praise, our confession, our petition, we were not ashamed of the tears that coursed down our cheeks. On the vast prairie, I could suddenly see everything in a new perspective: It was not because of ourselves that we amounted to anything—not because of our own struggle or our achievement—it was because God himself had given our lives meaning. We were part of his plan, of his order, significant because we were his, not our own.

We went on with our journey, feeling a new sense of God's living presence. There were other stops, and other groups to whom we brought greetings and among whom we held services, but it would take too long to tell of them all. Months later I was to return to organize a church at Pasamonte, and others followed me, so that this trip was only a beginning of a significant work.

The next October when I was to deliver my sermon as retiring moderator, I toiled long and hard over the composition. Try as I would, I could not make it sound like Dr. Lapsley McAfee's! But I need not have worried about it.

That year, 1904, was the time of the great floods. The roads to Albuquerque, where the synod meeting was to be held, were feet deep under rushing water. Houses were washed away and many families left homeless. Four trains were marooned at Lamy, the railroad being forced to feed the passengers for days on short rations. By the time I finally reached the meeting, it was far too late for my sermon.

I was glad. My summer experience had taken away my taste for anything that smacked of pride, as my sermon might have done. And when the gentlemen asked me for a speech, I simply told them of a missionary journey in a spring wagon and a prayer meeting on the plain.

Much More to Tell

THE STORY is not ended, but if it were all told it would make another book, and there is no time to write it. I have passed my eighty-ninth birthday now, and only by a near miracle am I alive at all, for I have been very ill. Sometimes my old heart goes pounding lickety-split so that even my deaf ears can hear it. And so, although there is so much, much more to tell, this must be the last chapter.

When I glance back over the years of the first part of this century, I have fleeting glimpses of myself moving through them. I see myself at my father's funeral (he was taken ill while traveling with me on missionary duties) . . . riding horseback on a snowy road all night hurrying from some evangelistic meetings to Amelia when her mother died . . . preaching the funeral sermon for Miss Jennie Clark, mission teacher at Chimayo. (Poor lady, she was ill with tuberculosis in a leaky, drafty house, and died there before the new teachers' home could be completed.) I see myself on a trip East at the time of the General Assembly meeting in Columbus, Ohio . . . with my friend Tomás Atencio taking my first auto ride on a sight-seeing bus . . . getting lost in the subways of New York City . . . visiting Dr. Fraser and Miss Speakman in Maryland . . . setting foot for the first time on foreign soil in Canada at Niagara Falls. I see myself a little later standing in the upper house of the territorial legislature in the capacity of chaplain . . . struggling with editorial problems of *La Aurora* . . . pleading with young men of village churches to enter the ministry (and sometimes

persuading them) . . . explaining to my various flocks that, while salvation was indeed free, still they ought to help pay their ministers' salaries . . . adjusting church properties with my Methodist brethren . . . arguing with architects . . . dedicating churches . . . and traveling—forever traveling—north, south, east, west, on missionary journeys.

From 1913 to 1928, while I was presbyterial missionary for Santa Fé Presbytery, we made our home in Las Vegas. I saw my daughters married—Ruth to the Rev. Carlos Córdova, one of the most brilliant of the younger Spanish American ministers; Rebecca to Mr. Abran Fernandez, a high school teacher; Myrtle to Mr. Jacob Bernal, also a teacher.

Rebecca always had a knack with pencil and paint brush, and I have had pride in seeing her widely recognized as an artist. Both Ruth and Myrtle are teachers. (Carlos Córdova died in the thirties—a great loss.) Abran Fernandez and Jacob Bernal are well known in their profession and recently Jacob has been elected superintendent of schools in Taos County. Both men are elders, very active in their respective churches. Yes, my daughters and sons-in-law are a great satisfaction to me.

But I have another satisfaction and joy—my second family.

For you must know that in 1925 my wife Amelia died. I went on with my work, as men have to do, but all the heart was gone out of it. I was miserable until I found the woman who gave my life another beginning.

She was Rebecca Medina, a truly beautiful girl with dark dancing eyes, a winning smile, and a quick mind. As a child she attended the Agua Negra Mission School at Holman between the second and sixth grades, walking or riding horseback four miles each way to reach it. She completed her training in 1927 at the Allison-James School in Santa Fé, now a coeducational junior high but then a high school for Spanish American girls. She had a little experience teaching in public schools.

In the same year in which she finished high school, we were married. Many heads wagged over the difference in our ages, for she was younger than my daughters, but no amount of head

wagging has kept our marriage from being successful. Oh, we have had troubles—sickness, financial worries, the death of our first little girl. But we had a common faith to sustain us, many Christian friends, and a family of which any man might be humbly proud.

Gabino Junior was graduated from the Taos High School and is now a lieutenant paratrooper in the medical detachment of the U. S. Army Airborne. He expects to be released before the end of this year (1953) and will work to earn his way through his last year of college.

Eddie (Edward H.) finished his course at Menaul School, Albuquerque, last spring. He is a candidate for the ministry, already under the care of Rio Grande Presbytery.

Elsa Frances, who is entering her senior year at Menaul, intends to become a nurse.

Andy (Andrés), the youngest and most unpredictable, is a ninth grader at the Allison-James School in Santa Fé.

Rebecca has been more than wife to me—helpmate, companion, nurse, the comfort of my old age. In all my work—for I can truthfully say that, although I “retired” in 1933, I have never been inactive except when I was sick—she has labored right beside me. She has taught little children, managed young people’s societies and social activities, driven a car on a thousand errands, and been a leader in women’s societies, both local and presbyterial. People turn to her, depend on her, trust her judgment.

Rebecca and I have worked together in Las Vegas (1927-28); in Las Animas and Pueblo, Colorado (1928-29), where our field lay not only in the churches but in scattered colonies of beet workers along the Arkansas River to the Kansas line; in El Paso, Texas (1929-30), where I was an assistant pastor; in San Angelo, Texas (1930-33), where we built up a church that had literally died; in Las Vegas again, where I filled various vacant pulpits; and in Denver, where we have lived for the past three years.

Rebecca is now at work in the Presbyterian Hospital here. Not long ago she took a course in practical nursing. When she

received her diploma, the only words in the whole ceremony my deaf old ears could catch were the words of my little wife's name.

Few old timers are left who remember mission work in the Southwest before the turn of the century. How often I have sat on platforms at anniversary celebrations and made speeches recalling the old days! How many letters and accounts I have written so that the memory of those days should not be lost! I am satisfied that what is most valuable in them will remain. It is the faith which we see living again in our children and which, I trust, will live again in our children's children.

Everything I have reasonably wished for has happened to my heart's desire except the publishing of "our book." Since the story is already on its way to the printer's, it seems that this last of my hopes may indeed be fulfilled.

When I was twenty-one years old and asked for another twenty-one years in which to serve my Master, I little guessed that He would grant me more than three times that many—and I am thankful.

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